R. Nagaswamy

MASTERPIECES OF EARLY SOUTH INDIAN BRONZES

MASTERPIECES OF EARLY SOUTH INDIAN BRONZES

NATIONAL MUSEUM, NEW DELHI

© National Museum, New Delhi
First Published 1983
Layout: Kushal Pal.

Published by Dr. C. B. Pandey for the Department of Culture,
National Museum New Delhi.
Printed by H. K. Mehta at Thomson Press (I) Ltd., Faridabad

सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मन्त्री भारत

PRIME MINISTER,
INDIA.

MESSAGE

The bronzes of the South embody one of the highest achievements of Indian art. They are part of the world's heritage, and will be prized so long as civilisation endures. Chola Bronzes in particular are celebrated for their mastery in portraying the grace of the human form enlivened by spiritual benignity. Rarely has sculpture achieved a better combination of beauty and power.

Much of this art was until recently seen only in temple cloisters and colonnades. The National Museum has done well to organise an exhibition of these great art treasures to coincide with the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi.

I send my good wishes for the exhibition.

Indira Gandhi.

(Indira Gandhi)

New Delhi
February 2, 1983

M. G. RAMACHANDRAN
CHIEF MINISTER

FORT ST. GEORGE
MADRAS-600 009

Dated 10-2-1983.

MESSAGE

The people in ancient Tamilnadu used metal, wood and stone as medium of expression of certain ideas. Their fascination for art and literature and love of Nature as well found fruition in creation of exquisite art works in stone and bronze. This creative art was highly patronized by temples and kings.

The contribution of Tamil kings like the Cholas, the Pandiyas and the Cheras to temple art and architecture as visual manifestations of Dravidian aesthetic perception and artistic skill, is highly commended by historians and chroniclers of arts. The use of metal to foster religious art became very popular, resulting in casting of several hundred bronze images for worship and festivals. The temples, the most beneficent institutions of society, gave new immpetus to the development of the fine arts including Sculpture, Music and Dance. People cherished the democratic ideals and institutions. The village life was happy and peaceful. The Village Assemblies protected temple property, art and culture. Such conducive social life and royal patronage were responsible for flowering of temple art.

I am glad that some of the choicest bronze art pieces of Tamilnadu are to be exhibited at New Delhi in connection with the Non-Aligned Summit Meet. I hope that the Exhibition will focus the attention of the participants at the Meet on the rich contribution of the Tamils to the art heritage of the world.

I have great pleasure in sending my best wishes for the success of the Exhibition.

(M. G. Ramachandran)

विदेश मंत्री
नई दिल्ली-११००११
THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
NEW DELHI-110011.

January 29

1. The bronzes of South India rank in the same category as the famed steel of Damascus in terms of metalurgical skill and with the gold artefacts of Egypt and Peru in terms of workmanship. They are testimony of the great heights of craftmanship and aesthetics achieved over fifteen centuries ago.

2. The wide variety and exquisite beauty of the bronze icons of South India, particularly those of the Pallava and Chola periods is a matter of joy and pride for every Indian, the connoisseur as also the uninitiated in art. To the majority of the latter, the icons which are the principal products of the bronze master craftsman's art, are the representation of deities who sustain their faith, and therefore fulfil their innermost aspirations.

3. Inspite of the comparative profusion of ancient bronzes of South India, one is normally not in a position to see many of them at the same time and certainly not in the same place. Only a few of the most outstanding of these works are in any one museum, and some of them can only be seen in old and remote temples. The achievement of the Department of Culture in bringing together an impressive collection of them for exhibition at the National Museum in New Delhi is as praiseworthy as it is impressive. It will provide art lovers of India and the world a unique opportunity to enjoy the masterful combination of form, proportion, balance and movement contained in what is probably the most beautiful collection of ancient bronze icons anywhere in the world.

P. V. Narsimha Rao

शिक्षा, संस्कृति तथा समाज कल्याण मंत्री
भारत सरकार
MINISTER OF
EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE & CULTURE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI-110001

Dated 23.2.83

The architecture, sculpture and paintings of South India constitute one of the richest heritages of India. Tamilnadu is the home of many ancient monuments, temples and stupas. Here traditions of many centuries have been kept alive with the dedication of the people of Tamilnadu. South Indian bronzes represent the most outstanding examples of artistic creation. Many amongst these have been seen in Museums of India and abroad and yet many more are in the temple and math collections.

I am happy that the temple and the maths and the art galleries of Tamilnadu have generously loaned these pieces of great artistic beauty for this exhibition in the National Museum. This exhibition will be a historic landmark in bringing together bronzes which have never before been seen outside the temple precincts.

Sheila Kaul

(Sheila Kaul)

R. M. VEERAPPAN
MINISTER FOR INFORMATION
AND
HINDU RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
TRUTH ALONE TRIUMPHS

FORT ST. GEORGE
MADRAS-600 009

Dated 17.2.83

The earliest representation of the Art of making figures in metal goes back to the third millennium B.C. in India, when the glorious Harappan civilization was flourishing on the banks of the river Indus, in the North West of India. Russian, Finnish and Indian scholars working with aid of computors, have come to the conclusion that the Indus Valley Civilization is Proto-Dravidian. The Dravidian contribution to metal art, especially in the dancing girl from Mohanjadaro, is a marvel in the Ancient world. Ever since, Dravidian artists have contributed immensely to the enrichment of bronze casting. In the extreme South of India, on the banks of the river Tamiraparani, the ancient village Adichanallur, has yielded outstanding figures made of copper representing a mother goddess, animals and birds ascribed to 7th century, before Christ. The Sangam literature of the Tamils refer to the artists working in various media, including metal, in ancient capitals like Kaveripoompattinam, Madurai and other centres. The Tamil artists have specialised in sculptural art, carving images in stone, from about the beginning of the 7th Century A.D. when hard granite outcrops cut into Monolithic rathas as found at Mamallapuram. Even the temple looks like a sculpture designed and carved by the Pallava artist at places like Kanchi. With the advent of the Cholas, from the end of the 10th century to the end of 13th century, an era of great flowering in the field of literature, art, music and dance was ushered in sculptures reaching 14 to 16 feet in height are found in the temple of Tanjore and several hundred stone temples with exceptionally beautiful sculptures are found all over the Tamil country, dating back to Chola age particularly from 10th to 11th century A.D. The sculptures at Gangaikondacholapuram and other Chola temples, witness the height to which the art reached. The main emphases laid by the Cholas on the sculptural art, extended beyond the medium of stone. Several thousand bronze images were made and consecrated in the temples for performing worship and procession. Such a large volume of metal images speak of the ability of the Tamil people and also the importance given to the artists specially by the Chola rulers which has undoubtedly received the admiration of the entire world. The creation of the image of Nataraja, which is almost in every Siva temple, is considered as one of the greatest contribution of Tamil genius to world's aesthetic thought. In form, in proportion and in elegance, they stand unrivalled. The long tradition of making metal images, for over 2000 years, is found nowhere in the world, consecrated with such religious fervour. The festivals, in which these metal images are carried attract millions of people all over the Tamil land as a living faith. I am happy to note that most outstanding bronzes from Tamilnadu are being placed in the exhibition to be organised in connection with 'The Non-aligned Summit' meet at Delhi in the beginning of March. We are happy to participate by making available several images from our temple collections.

I send my hearty greetings for the success of the exhibition.

Veerappan

(R.M. Veerappan)

Acknowledgements

1. Hon'ble Thiru M. G. Ramachandran,
   Chief Minister of Tamilnadu.

2. Hon'ble Thiru R. M. Veerappan,
   Minister for Religious Endowment and Tourism,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

3. Hon'ble Thiru C. Aranganayagam,
   Minister for Education,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

4. Thiru K. Diraviam, I.A.S.,
   Chief Secretary to Government,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

5. Thiru S. Narasimhan, I.A.S.,
   Commissioner and Secretary to Government,
   Commercial Taxes and Religious Endowment Department,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

6. Thiru C. Ramdas, I.A.S.,
   Commissioner and Secretary to Government,
   Department of Education, Science and Technology,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

7. Thiru R. Shanmugasigamani, I.A.S.,
   Commissioner,
   Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

8. Thiru K. Mohandas, I.P.S.,
   Inspector General of Police,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

9. Thiru Rajasekharan Nair, I.P.S.,
   Deputy Inspector General of Police,
   Government of Tamilnadu.

10. Thiru P. Alwar,
    Deputy Secretary to Government,
    Commercial Taxes and Religious Endowment Department,
    Government of Tamilnadu.

11. Thiru Meikand Devan I.A.S.,
    Collector of Thanjavur District,
    Government of Tamilnadu.

12. Thiru N. Swaminathan,
    Assistant Commissioner,
    Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department,
    Government of Tamilnadu.

13. Thiru J. Rama Krishnan,
    Deputy Superintendent of Police,
    C.B. C.I.D.
    Government of Tamilnadu.

14. Dr. R. Nagaswamy
    Director, State Department of Archaeology,
    Tamilnadu.

15. Thiru K. Shridharan,
    Registering Officer,
    State Department of Archaeology,
    Government of Tamilnadu.

The lending institutions

1. Executive Officer and the Trustees,
   The Jambukesvara Temple,
   Thiruvanaikka,
   Thiruchi district.

2. The Collector/Chairman,
   Thanjavur Art Gallery,
   Thanjavur.

3. The Executive Officer, and
   The Managing Trustees'
   The Thyagaraja temple,
   Thiruvarur.

4. The Executive Officer and the Trustees
   Thel Singaravelar temple, Sikkal,
   Thanjavur district.

5. The Executive Officer and the Trustees
   The Nilayathakshi Temple, Nagapattinam.
   Thanjavur district.

6. The Executive Officer and the Trustees,
   The Marunthisvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi,
   Thanjavur district.

7. The Executive Officer and the Trustees,
   Konesvara temple, Kudavasal,
   Thanjavur district.

8. Sila Sri Mahasannidhanam Avl,
   Thiruvaduturai Adheenam Mutt,
   Thiruvaduturai

9. The Director,
   Government Museum, Madras.

10. The Director,
    Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology,
    Madras.

11. The Executive Officer,
    Kumbhesvara temple, Kumbakonam,
    Thanjavur district.

12. National Museum,
    Janpath, New Delhi.

Photographs:

Dr. R. Nagaswamy: B/W 1–16; 32–49; 63–69; 74–88; 90, 91, 93–98; 101–121; 127–135; 139–150; 152, 153, 155, 156, 158, 159. Colour: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 18–29; 31–38 and Cover.

Rest by Sardar Amarik Singh, Shri N. Shah, and Shri J. C. Arora.

PREFACE

From the bronze figurine of the dancing girl, or fertility goddess, from Mohenjodaro, to the 18th century bronzes of the Vijayanagara period, there is a great tradition of metal work in India. Metal sculpture appears to have been known to all parts of India from proto-historic times, judging from recent finds in Kashmir, Maharashtra and Orissa.

In the historic period, metal sculpture had attained a degree of sophistication and refinement comparable to that of stone sculpture in the round or in bas-relief. Examples have come to light of the fifth and sixth centuries, but from the eighth to the thirteenth century, during the reigns of the Pallavas and the Cholas, a marked development took place. Concurrent were the traditions of bronze casting in Kashmir, Bihar and Orissa, and, a little later, Kerala. Stylistically each school can be clearly distinguished. Together they are related to traditions in Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Among these various traditions of South and of South east Asia, of different periods and regions, the South Indian bronzes of the early medieval period are in a class by themselves, distinctive for their chiselled sophistication, perfection of modelling and restrained artistic statement. They are unmatched examples of a mastery of formal elements and of the techniques of *cire perdue* casting. They articulate in artistic form what the *Shāstras* and the canons perscribe in theory and description. As icons they imbody myths known to all parts of India and are then deities, the concrete symbols in varied forms of the godhead, who, in the last analysis, is without form and beyond form. Each image is, at one level specific and local, manifesting regional variations of legends and of iconographical details, and at another, is pan-Indian and universal, the expression of creative genius which transcends region, period and style. Each image is a complete autonomous world, emerging out of a context of sacred ritual and temple worship, but communicating in artistic terms beyond time and space.

Understandably these bronzes have evoked many responses, some negative, others ecstatic. They bewildered Goethe. They inspired Zimmer and Rodin, stimulated Coomaraswamy to present a theory of art which made no intrinsic distinction between art and craft. Aurobindo wrote about their philosophic background and their capacity to evoke spiritual states of being. Mercia Eliade related the images to the larger background of religion and speculative thought. Stella Kramrisch dwelt on their artistic beauty and Alice Boner on the sacred geometry they followed. The first among the art historians to present a descriptive account of these bronzes was O.C. Ganguly. He drew attention to them in a monograph published in 1916 entitled, *South Indian Bronzes*.Other scholars followed, both in India and Europe. These included Gravely and Ramachandran, who published the *Catalogue of Hindu Metal Images in the Madras Museum* in 1932, and Coomaraswamy who wrote his famous essay on the Nataraja. Stella Kramrisch, Alice Boner, and above all Sivaramamurti followed.

The last spent many decades of his life devotedly exploring the iconography of South Indian bronzes. His research culminated in the publication by the Lalit Kala Akademi of the first comprehensive account of South Indian bronzes against their historical background. He analysed the bronzes from the point of view of myth, legend, iconography and the principles enunciated in the *Shāstras* and the *Āgamas*.

It was his writing, along with that of Coomaraswamy, which was responsible for drawing attention to the artistic excellence and the overpowering beauty of these bronzes for students of comparative religion and of Indian philosophy, as also of ancient and mediaeval art.

The last two decades have brought forth many new riches. Now it is clear that, apart from the Chola bronzes, there were bronzes from the Pallava period. Clear distinctions of artistic style and iconographical details are evident between the Pallava and the Chola, as well as the Chalukayan, the Kakatiya and the Kerala bronzes. Each discovery has been a joy and an addition to knowledge about the wealth hidden in private and public collections.

Many splendid examples of South Indian bronzes have been collected by the Thanjavur Art Gallery, the Government Museum, Madras and the National Museum. T. A. Gopinath Rao, T. N. Ramachandran, Karl Khandalawala, S. R. Balasubramaniam, P. R. Srinivasan, Douglas Barett, Pratapaditya Pal and, most of all, Dr. R. Nagaswamy have been responsible for bringing to light many hitherto unnoticed South Indian bronzes.

These new discoveries, published, published principally in the *Lalit Kala, Artibus Asiae* and other journals, have enabled scholars to focus attention on the chronology of South Indian bronzes and to analyse more fully variations of iconographical details and differences in technique. Some of these are outstanding examples of artistic excellence. Much of this writing nevertheless was restricted to consideration of images which had been acquired by museums, or those which had been found in isolated private collections. Scholars had noticed, but not studied, and seldom published, images in temple collections. Many of these have been hidden in dark corners of temple storage, away from public gaze. While a few may have been seen, many others have so far been stored behind closed doors. Some devotees may have seen these sculptures as icons during the *nityotasavas* and the *mahotsavas* (daily and annual worship). On these occasions they are clothed and bedecked with jewels. However, systematic registration or accession list was available. As part of the registration of antiquities, the Religious Endowment Department and Dr. R. Nagaswamy have made valuable accession lists and inventories for Tamilnadu. Dr. Nagaswamy also brought to light invaluable evidence through the inscribed images which could now enable scholars to date firmly Pallava bronzes and to establish chronology. Amongst these unknown bronzes were masterpieces of supreme beauty and unsurpassed technical skill. Altogether they constitute a wealth of material awaiting the investigation of scholars, art historians and students of comparative religion and ritual.

Repeated visits to the temples, *māṭhas*; villages and *talukas* and the numerous private and public repositories convinced me that some day it should be possible to share the joy of these hidden treasures, so carefully protected by temple and *maṭha* authorities, with larger audiences of savants and connoisseurs. Dr. R. Nagaswamy, who had been guide and companion on these journeys, responded enthusiastically. Slow and careful preparation and some tenacity in pursuading temple and *maṭha* authorities to loan these images has at last born fruit in the shape of this exhition in the National Museum of masterpieces of South Indian bronzes. These have been largely drawn from the storage collections of the temples of Singaravelar, Sikkal, and Vaḍakkalattur. They also include bronzes from Thiruthuraippundi and the villages of Koilpattu, Paruthiyur and from the Vadavir temple. Some bronzes of great beauty, already known to the world, have been borrowed from the Art Galley, Thanjavur and from the Madras Museum.

A few of the latest acquisitions of the National Museum, especially the Tripurāntaka, have been included. By and large they are unpublished and are being exhibited for the first time. Only a few among them have travelled to the United Kingdom for the *In the Image of Man* exhibition, held in the Hayward Gallery, London. It would be impossible to identify the most outstanding image in the exhibition, but perhaps the Vaḍakkalattur Kalyāṇasundara, the frontisepiece, can be singled out as an image which will not only bring great joy and delight to all who see it, but will open up new vistas of further exploration and art analysis. Many others are examples of the highest refined artistic sensibility.

For the primary identification, selection and collecton of bronzes, we are beholden to Dr. R. Nagaswamy, whose tireless efforts in the field and sound scholarship are well known. He will, it is hoped, continue the work of his peers, particularly that of Shri. T. N. Ramachandran and Shri. C. Sivaramamurti. He and his staff of the Department of Archaeology, Tamilnadu, have accomplished the arduous task of collecting the bronzes from the temples, *maṭhas* and villages, and bringing them to Madras. Dr. Nagaswamy has also written the Introduction to the catalogue and the catalogue entries in record time, and for all this we are grateful to him.

The Government of Tamil Nadu was enthusiastic, responsive and generous. The Ministry and Secretary of Information and the Religious Endowment Department, the Education Secretary and the Chief Secretary have all been most helpful. The Chief Minister of Tamilṇadu, Thiru M. G. Ramachandran has generously allowed these loans and the Minister of Religious Endowment, Thiru R. M. Veerappan has been especially kind. We are indebted to them. Thiru S. Narasimhan, Secretary, Thiru Shanmukha Sikhamani, Commissioner, Thiru C. Ramadas, Secretary for Education, Science and Technology have been specially kind. We are indebted to them.

The Ministry of Defence, especially the Minister of Defence, Shri R. Venkataraman, has facilitated the transportation by placing an aircraft at our disposal. We acknowledge our thanks to him.

The fortuitous circumstance of the visit of Dr. Pramod Chandra, Bickford Professor of Art, Harward University, to Delhi made it possible for us to make demands on his knowledge. He edited the Catalogue and spared his valuable time to make many helpful suggestions.

To Dr. Grace Morley we are all indebted. She has always been a source of inspiration and guidance. She has assisted in the installation and in many other matters. We are grateful to her.

The staff of the National Museum has done the delicate task of packing and the transportation from Tamilnadu to Delhi. Shri I. D. Mathur, as usual, has carried out the task of organisation with great competence. Shri. Aditya Narain arranged the packing and transportation with great care. Dr. C. B. Pandey and his colleagues have been responsible for the difficult task of publication of the Catalogue in a very short time. Shri B. K. Dhar has handsomely designed the display and the presentation of the exhibition, and Dr. Shashi Asthana, the Keeper of Archaeology, carried out muticulously overall supervision. To the Conservation Laboratory we are indebted for making the bronzes ready for exhibition. Captain Mathews and his team have ensured security. We thank them all.

There are many others who cannot be mentioned by name, but we should like to thank sincerely all those who made it possible to have this exhibition on the significant occasion of the Non-aligned Summit Conference. An acknowledgement list is appended of the lending institutions and individuals.

Most of all, we would like to pay our homage to those annonymous artists, the makers of these images, who have imbued metal with life, given shape and form to an inner vision, and who have left behind these immortal works of art, which speak a polyvalent language of myth, religion and artistic expression and are symbolic microcosms of the macrocosm. Their essential function in temple ritual is never forgotten, but their validity outside this context is equally meaningful.

Last of all, we remember today the savant, scholar, the devoted fountain-head of scholarship in this field, the late Sri C. Sivaramamurti. His insights and knowledge, his writing and his lectures were for all of us like the flow of the Himalayan sparkling cascade of wisdom, experience and perceptions, by whose waters we were all sustained. To his memory this Exhibition is dedicated.

Kapila Vatsyaayan
Additional Secretary
Department of culture
Ministry of Education and Culture, New Delhi.

Dated: 23.2.1983

INTRODUCTION

History: The Tamil country, comprising the area from modern Madras in the north to Kanyakumari in the south, is watered by a number of perennial rivers, not only the great Kaveri. Evidences of stone age man have been recovered from this area and evidences of megalithic burials and habitations dating from about 1000 B.C., to the first few centuries of Christian era are abundant. Adiccanallur, a village on the banks of the river Tamraparni, near Thirunelveli, has yielded metal art objects of some sophistication from an urn burial. These are presently dated to about the seventh century B.C. so that there is some evidence for the existence of a well-developed art of metal sculpture at an early period, but whether this tradition had any links with work in the historical period remains to be established.

The Sangam age, lasting from about the 3rd century B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era, was marked by the creation of great works of literature which also give us a clear insight into contemporary society, but no works of art from that period have been yet discovered and this is also true of the age of the Tamil epics, the *Śilappadhikāram* and *Maṇimekhalai* assigned to the 3rd century A.D.

The Pallavas appear in the northern part of Tamilnadu about the fourth century A.D., and established a rule of great significance for the history of art which lasted till almost the tenth century A.D. With Kanchipuram as their capital, Pallava rule extended at times upto Thiruchirappalli in the south and Mangalore on the west coast. The Pandyas, with their capital at Madurai, their territories extending upto Kanyakumari in the south were their contemporaries. During this period the Cholas were completely eclipsed.

Not only were the Pallavas great patrons of arts, but some of them, notably Mahendravarman I (A.D. 590–630) and Rajasimha (A.D. 700–730) were themselves accomplished artists and poets. Among the more famous monuments of their times are the temples at Mamallapuram and the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram with its noble sculptures and paintings.

The growth of the Bhakti movement of surpassing importance in the development of art coincided with the rise of Pallava rule. The pervasive influence of the devotional creeds as preached by the Śaiva Nāyanmārs and Vaishṇava Āḻvar saints resulted in the establishment of literally hundred of temples in addition to those already in existence. Their poems reveal a well developed routine of temple worship, festivals, music and dance. From about the seventh century A.D., great temples of stone also began to be built, and epigraphic evidence indicates the existence of elaborate Āgamic schools that gave a canonical basis for temple life. The Pandyas also excavated cave shrines and built temples but their activities did not match those of the Pallava territory.

The rise of the Chola dynasty begins with Vijayālaya around the middle of the ninth century. He expanded his territories at the expense of the Pallava and Pandya empires, a process furthered by his son and successor, Āditya I (875–906 A.D.) who eradicated Pallava power almost completely. Besides being a great warrior, Āditya, was deeply religious and claims to have built or renovated 108 temples of stone, all along the banks of the river Kaveri especially in the deltaic region of Thanjavur district. Some exceptionally fine creations, not only the Nageśvara temple of Kumbakonam and some fine bronze sculpture can be attributed to his times. Parāntaka I (907–955 A.D.) brought the southern country of the Pandyas under his rule, and erected more stone temples. We are fortunate in having a bronze image of Pārvatī dated A.D. 917 which is of great help in understanding the chronological development of South Indian bronze sculpture. References to the Naṭarāja form of Śiva are also found in inscriptions of his reign and it is safe to conclude that the Ānanda Tāṇḍava images of the God were made from at least his time onwards.

Among the successors of Parāntaka I, the Chola queen Sembiyan Mahādevī needs special mention. Widowed very early in life, she devoted most of her life to renovating temples and instituting worship and endowments. This pious lady, of great ability and taste, was responsible for many metal images which are consecrated in temples like the one at Konerirājapuram. An outstanding piece in the present exhibition, the Umā from Nallur (Fig. 182) is a particularly elegant example of her school.

The greatest of Chola emperors was Rājarāja I (985–1014 A.D.), a great conqueror and a wise ruler. By a careful reorganisation of the administration, and the encouragement of agriculture and commerce, he succeeded in bringing about great economic prosperity. The great temple of Thanjavur, of which he was the builder, is a visual symbol of his achievement. Deeply devoted to Lord Śiva, he was a patron of dance and music. The temple sculptures reverberate with the sound of music and the movement of dance. Rājarāja's personal attention to every detail of temple life is spelled out in his inscriptions which also refer to the consecration of several metal images that are described in detail. The following is the translation of the inscription engraved under the orders of Rājarāja Chola on a wall of the great temple at Thanjavur, describing the installation of a Gaṇeśa image.

"One solid image of Pillaiyār Gaṇapati in the dancing posture, with four arms and measuring fourteen *viral* in height from the feet to the hair; one lotus on which this image stood, set with jewels and measuring two *viral* and two *torai* in height; one pedestal on which this image stood, measuring sixteen *viral* and two *torai* in length, thirteen *viral* in breadth and three *viral* in height; one solid aureole, covering this image and measuring two *muram* and seventeen *viral* in circumference.

One solid image of Pillaiyār Gaṇapati, in the standing

1

2

3

Face details of heads

1. Head of Devī of Kalyāṇasundara, Vaḍakkalattur, c. A.D. 875
2. Head of Kalyāṇasundara Vaḍakkalattur, c. A.D. 875
3. Head of Tripurāntaka, Ponvilaintanpatti, Thanjavur, c. A.D. 875
4. Head of Māṇikkavācaka, Chidambaram, c. A.D. 925
5. Head of Bhairava, Thiruthuraippundi, c. A.D. 925
6. Head of Naṭarāja, Madras Government Museum, c. A.D. 950
7. Head of Tripurāntaka National Museum, New Delhi c. A.D. 970
8. Head of Tripurāntaka Mayavaram, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 975

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

9. Head of Vṛishavāhana,
Thanjavur Art Gallery, A.D. 1011
10. Head of Devī of Vṛishavāhana
Thanjavur Art Gallery, A.D. 1012
11. Head of Devī of Kalyāṇasundara
Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur Art Gallery,
c. A.D. 1010
12. Head of Kalyāṇasundara
Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur Art Gallery,
c. A.D. 1010.
13. Head of Subrahmaṇya
Gangaikoṇḍacholapuram, c. A.D. 1020
14. Head of Devī
Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur Art Gallery,
c. A.D. 1050
15. Head of Devī
Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur Art Gallery,
c. A.D. 1150

11

12

13

14

15

posture, with four arms and measuring eight *viral* in height from the feet to the hair; one lotus measuring two *viral* in height and eighteen *viral* in circumference, forming part of this image."

This is clear proof of the patronage enjoyed by artists working in metal and Rājarāja's contributions to the art. The Vrishavāhana with Devī in this exhibition (Cat. No. 2) is a superb example of his times.

Rājarāja's son Rājendra I (A.D. 1012–1044) was a great conqueror, his empire extending to Śrīvijaya and Kadara (modern Malaysia and adjacent territories). At home he reached the banks of the Gaṅgā, assuming the proved title of Gangaikoṇḍa Chola. He also built a new capital and a great temple at Gangaikondacholapuram.

The great impetus given to art during Chola rule continued almost to the beginning of the twelfth century when signs of exhaustion, expressed in increasing conventionalisation of aesthetic perception began to act in the great names in Chola history of this phase are Kulottunga I (1070–1125), his son Vikrama Chola (1118–1135), Kulottunga II (1133–50), in whose reign the great *gopuras* of Chidambaram were erected and Rājarāja II (1146–1175) the builder of the lovely temple at Darasuram near Kumbakonam. The last of the great Chola ruler was Kulottunga III (1178–1218) who erected the Tribhuvanam temple. Temples of this later Chola period also preserve consecrated bronzes that amplify our understanding of the art of this phase. Since the entire south, parts of which were once ruled by the Pandyas came under the effective suzerainty of the Cholas, the temples in Pandya country also have bronzes in the Chola idiom. Even when towards the end of the thirteenth century the later Pandyas overthrew mighty Chola empire, the Chola school continued to flourish for another hundred years under the new dynasty. Bronze sculptures cast under the Vijayanagar and later under the Nayaka dynasty are numerically quite large but the style has lost its freshness and vitality.

While inscriptional evidence is of some help in dating bronzes of the Chola age, Pallava bronzes can be dated only

16

16. Vishṇu (under worship), near Madras, c. A.D. 800

17. Apasmārapurusha of Kunniyur Naṭarāja, c. A.D. 950

17

18. Apasmārapurusha of Thiruvarangulam Naṭarāja, c. A.D. 975

18

on stylistic grounds. Several bronzes that bear very close resemblance to the dated stone sculpture of the eighth and ninth century A.D. have come to light in recent years so that the existence of a Pallava style is now beyond doubt. Among well-known Pallava bronzes are the lovely Somāskanda from Thiruvalangadu, Thanjavur district, now in the Government Museum Madras (8th century A.D.), the Vishāpaharaṇa (8th century), the Kuram Naṭarāja (8th century A.D.) and the Maitreya (8th century) from Kaveripumpattinam. A number of images of Vishṇu have been reported from several places, like Perunthottam. A magnificent image of Vishṇu of Pallava period (c. A.D. 800) is under worship in a temple near Madras. An extraordinary image of Trivikrama, in metal, now under worship in Singanallur near Coimbatore, is a splendid image of the Pallava age. All these images have broad and high shoulders, heavy lower garments, the rolled waist cloth falling heavily between the legs, the *upavīta*, often with broad ribbon-like *uttarīya* carried over the right arm. An examination of Pallava bronzes also makes it clear that the artist paid greater attention to even minute details in the wax stage itself so that there was little chiselling to do after casting the image. By contrast from about the 12th century A.D., the wax model was fairly rough made and extensive chiselling had to be resorted to after final casting.

To the list of Pallava bronzes given earlier, one can add newly discovered examples from Thiruneipper village, Thanjavur district, one of Vishṇu (8th century A.D.), another of Tripurāntaka (9th century A.D.) and also an image of Sukhāsana Śiva of the Somāskanda group (9th century A.D.). The Tripurāntaka is of large size and along with the Kuram Naṭeśa and the Singanallur Trivikrama, demonstrates that the Pallava artists had begun to cast large size metal images by the eighth century.

The discovery of an inscribed Pārvatī dated A.D. 917, (A Naṭarāja bronze and inscribed Umā from Karaiviram village, R. Nagaswamy, *Lalit Kala* No. 19, pp. 17–19), helps us in assigning some rather elusive bronzes to the late Pallava period. An outstanding example of this style is the splendid Kalyāṇasundara from Vaḍakkalattur, Thanjavur district to be dated c. A.D. 875 ('Pallava bronzes from

19. Apasmārapurusha of Karaivīram Naṭarāja, c. A.D. 915

19

20

20. Devī (inscribed) Karaivīram, A.D. 917

21

22

23

24

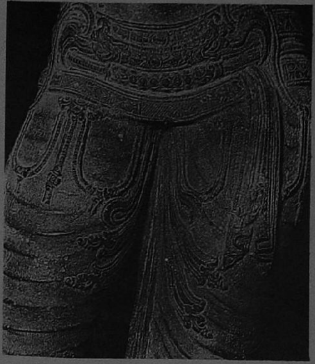
25

26

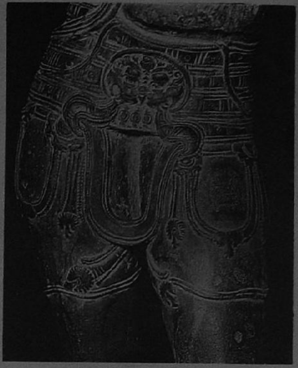
27

21. Vishṇu, (detail), Thiruneipper, c. A.D. 750
22. Kalyāṇasundara, (detail) Vaḍakkalattur, c. A.D. 875
23. Vishṇu, (detail) Paruthiyur, c. A.D. 925
24. Tripurāntaka (detail)
National Museum, New Delhi
25. Devī, (detail)
Nallur, c. A.D. 975
26. Vṛishavāhana, (detail)
Thanjavur Art Gallery,
c. A.D. 1011
27. Vishṇu (detail) Thiruvenkadu
Thanjavur Art Gallery,
c. A.D. 1010

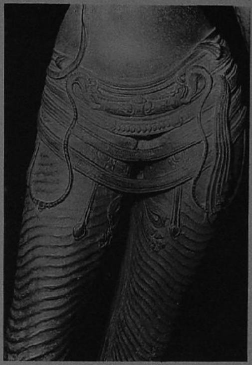
28



29



30



31

28. Kalyānasundara, (detail) Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 1010
29. Devī, (detail), Thanjavur Art Gallery c. 1150
30. Tripurāntaka (detail) Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 1150

32

31. Devī, (detail) Thanjavur Art Gallery c. A.D. 1100

32. Pārvatī, (detail) Thiruvanaikka. c. A.D. 1100

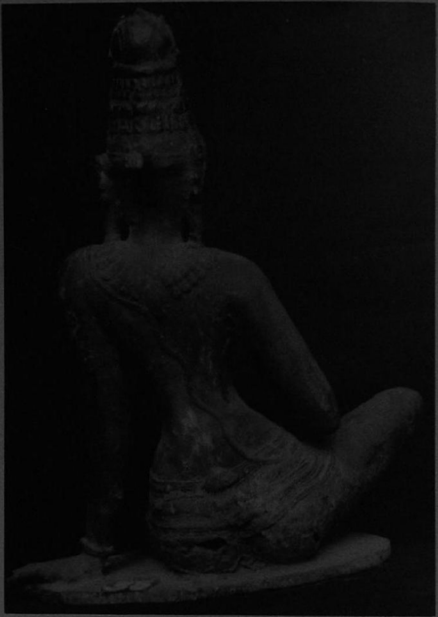
Vaḍakalattur, R. Nagaswamy, *Oriental Art*, Spring 1971). The Naṭarāja and Śivakāmī from the same village were also made about the same times. It is well to recall that Thanjavur district, was under the Pallava rule from the sixth to almost the 10th century A.D. Several inscriptions including royal charters on copper plates have come to light from Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Mayavaram, and Nagapattinam regions—all in Thanjavur district.

The art of the Cholas though soon to show an individuality and vitality of its own, was essentially an extension of the art of the Pallavas, the transition taking place round A.D. 900.

The art of the Chola of the early period may conveniently be sub-divided into the Āditya School, the Sembiyan Mahādevī school and the Rājarāja school, after the names of the three great Chola personages intimately associated in it. Of the Āditya school type, real examples are the outstanding Rāma group from Paruthiyur and the great Vishṇu from the same village. A number of Rāma groups that have survived, notably the Vaḍakkuppanaiyur Rāma in the Madras Museum, the Paruthiyur Rāma group, the Rāma group from Thiruccerai and the Kappalur Rāma group can also be assigned to the finest traditions of Āditya school. In this connection one can recall the title of Kodaṇḍa Rāma assumed by Āditya. These bronzes are marked by delicate workmanship.

The Sembiyan Mahādevī school is represented by the famous Konerirajapuram bronzes and the Nallur Pārvatī. The Thiruvarangulam Naṭarāja, now in the National Museum, is another outstanding example of this school. The style is characterised by clarity of workmanship, particularly

33. Pārvatī, (Front view)
Chidambaram, c. A.D. 1000



34. Pārvatī (Back view)
Chidambaram, c. A.D. 1000

in the modelling, and excels in rendering the *bhaṅgas* of the body, particularly the *tribhaṅga*. The accurate and detailed delineation of ornamental detail is another distinguishing feature. The face also presumes a sharpness of rendering noticed in the other schools.

The majesty and dignity of the Rājarāja school is best illustrated in the superlative Vṛishavāhana and his consorts from Thiruvenkadu, now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery. The delicacy of the Sembiyan Mahādevī school yields here to a certain dignity and authority. A great example of Rājarāja school is the large size Naṭarāja in the Thanjavur temple, to which Rājarāja dedicated several large size metal images for daily and annual festivals. The Somāskanda, called Dakshiṇameru Viṭankar, and the Naṭarāja, called Āḍavallār in inscriptions, are of imposing size. The Somāskanda and the Subrahmaṇya images now in the Gangaikoṇḍ-cholapuram temple, consecrated in the reign of Rājendra I, follow the traditions of the Rājarāja I period. The fine Bhikshāṭana deva unearthed at Thiruvenkadu, and consecrated around A.D. 1040, as well as the superb Ardhanārī from the same place and datable to around A.D. 1045 (consecrated around A.D. 1045), are the fine examples of the Rājarāja school though made in the time of Rājendra Chola. (New bronze finds from Thiruvenkadu, R. Nagaswamy. *TASSI*, 1960, pp. 108–122).

While attention has been focussed on the three great schools of the early Chola period, it is also necessary to draw attention to various families of artists who flourished at various regional centres and who have left us great masterpieces. Unfortunately their names are not known but they may be remembered by the villages where they flourished. A recent survey has established some such centres where the *sthapatis* have been active for three to four generations. Among these may be named Kilaiyur, Vaḍakkalattur and Thiruthuraippundi, all near Nagappattinam, Thiruneipper, Thiruvarur, Thiruvenkadu, Chidambaram, Konerirājapuram, Kumbakonam and Thanjavur. More such centres are likely to be identified in the future. These have left their impact not only on the art of the immdeiate surroundsings but on occasion at more distant places.

Technique: The metal images meant for worship in temples are cast solid including the large size Naṭarāja images, except the mounts like bulls, which are cast hollow. The process of casting these figures, a technique that has survived to this day, is the *cire perdue* process, called *madhūcchisṭa vidhāna* in the texts. The details of preparing the wax model, covering it with clay coat, pouring molten metal, as also the different measurements, poses and emblems suited to various manifestations are given in ritual treatises (*Āgamas*) and also in sculptor's manuals (*Śilpaśāstras*). Mainly copper was used for making these images; the epigraphs of the Cholas refer to them as copper image *Śeppu thirumeni*), though at a later period, the use of five metals (copper, silver, gold, brass and zinc) called the *pañcaloha* came into vogue. The five metals are said to represent earth, water, fire, air, and

35

35. A Temple car festival at Madras

ether, (the *pañcabhūtas*) denoting metaphysically that the God remains pervading the principal elements. The early images, as may be seen from the exhibition, exhibit a golden copper colour while the images of 13th century and later show the trend towards alloys. (For details see Shri C. Sivaranamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*.)

Religious Context: God, who is beyond form, manifests himself in the sanctum of the temple through an image, its form determined by the vision and devotion of the builder or the community. The construction and thereafter the worship is governed by sacred texts known as Āgamas or Tantras, ascribed to the sages of yore including Vedic *rishis* like Marīci, Atri and Bhṛigu. These texts determine the material of which a temple or image is to be made, the sequence of daily ritual, festivals and so on. All temples of Tamilnadu follow one or another of these sacred texts. The Āgamas specify three essential forms of worship namely the daily worship (*nityapūjā*), the daily festival (*nityotsavas*) and the annual or great festivals (*mahotsavas*) as essential elements in the conducting of temple ritual.

The principal image inside the sanctum is the immovable deity (*acala bimba*) generally made of stone and occasionally of wood, stucco or other materials. It is duly consecrated with chants and rites, which endow it with divine power. Once installed in the sanctum, the images assume per-

36

36. Procession of Caṇḍikeśvara

37

37. Decorated metal image in a temple festival.
38. Somāskanda on a mount (Nandi)

38

manancy and receive regular daily worship. As part of the temple worship, it is also necessary for the image to be taken out in procession around the main streets of the temple or the village settlements. Such daily festivals (*nityotsavas*) radiate the sacredness of the temple, to the entire community. The village or town is thus to be conceived as not only a secular habitation but an integral part of the totality, a cosmos on earth, laid out according to the ritual treatises. The daily festivals are a constant reminder of the inter-connection of the temporal and the spiritual, and the processions associated with it. The annual and seasonal festivals necessitate the creation of metal images as it is these that are thought of as being portable, images of stone, as we have just said, being permanent fixtures of the sanctum. This must have necessarily created a demand that ultimately fostered the talents of artists.

Festivals: Śaiva Āgamas prescribe the procession of nine metal images during daily festivals (*nityotsavas*), *viz.* those of Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa), Śiva, Devī, Pāśupatamūrti, the *astradeva*, Golaka liṅga, Skanda, Vṛisharāja and Caṇḍeśa (*Ajitāgama* 25, 3–5, pp. 294–299). All these nine images are to be made in metal, whether gold, silver or copper, copper alloys being by far the most common, though a few images of silver or gold survive. The Vaishṇava Āgamas speak of the images as *arcāmurti* (images for worship) and prescribe five types namely *karma, utsava, bali, snāna* and *śayana* (daily worship, festival, *bali*-offering, sacred bath, and bed-chamber). Except for the main deity in the sanctum, all others, it is enjoined, are to be made of metal. In Vishṇu temples, in addition to the

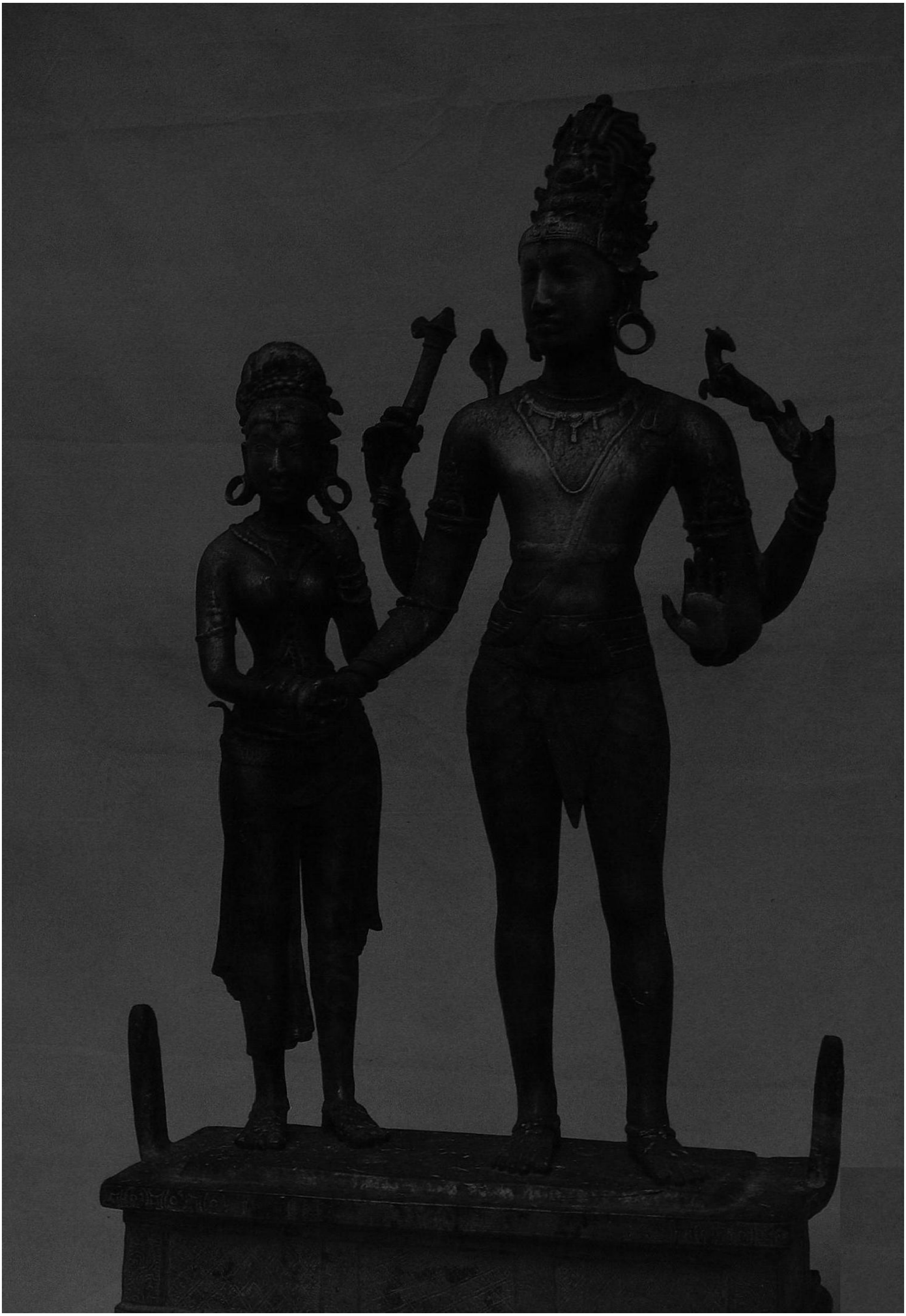
main deity of stone or wood installed in the sanctum, metal images of the same form called *kautukabera* are placed in front of the main deity and receive daily worship. They are also taken out in procession during annual festivals. So essential are metal images to the total ritual that daily worship is thought to be incomplete without them.

The Cholas patronised mainly the system of village assemblies, called the *sabhās*, *ūrs*, or *nagarams* (merchant settlements), laying special emphasis on integrity of character, efficiency in public administration and the required educational qualifications for members to be elected. The Chola epigraphs refering specifically to the above requirements, also prescribe minimum and maximum age limits for members and also restrict the period of service in the assembly to nine years, so that there was stability, continuity and sufficient opportunity of participation in public life. This sustained the enthusiasm of all sections of the people throughout the Chola rule, resulting in constant vigil, great care and thorough and efficient administration of public property, especially the temple endowments. The democratic system of village assemblies were mainly responsible, for a greater number of endowments to temples recorded in thousands of inscriptions of the age. There was an efflorescence, arts and literature, impelled by the religious fervour. The great authorities naturally designate the period as the golden age of the Cholas, which is also reflected in the bronzes of the period. This public participation was responsible for the institution of several festivals reflected in the metal images.

The antiquity of the daily processional festival of the Gods, in the Tamil country can be traced back to the beginning of the Christian era. The Sangam classics speak of such festivals in the city of Madurai when the image of Lord Śiva was carried at the head of procession with other Gods as well. A procession called the evening festival (*antiviḻā*) is also mentioned. The Devaram hymns of the Śaivite saints also refer to processional images in the seventh century A.D. Appar, a contemporary of the Pallava ruler Mahendra, speaks of the processional deity of Korukkai (*viṭankarāy vithi ponthār kurukkai rīraṭṭanāre*) and the grand festival of *ārdrā nakshatra* in the Vanmikanatha temple of Thiruvarur, presenting a most graphic description.

According to the Āgamas, it is necessary for the metal images made for processional rites to be smaller than the main divinity in the sanctum. In the 7th to 9th century A.D. (Pallava period) when the temples were of moderate size, the metal images of the age were also of small size.

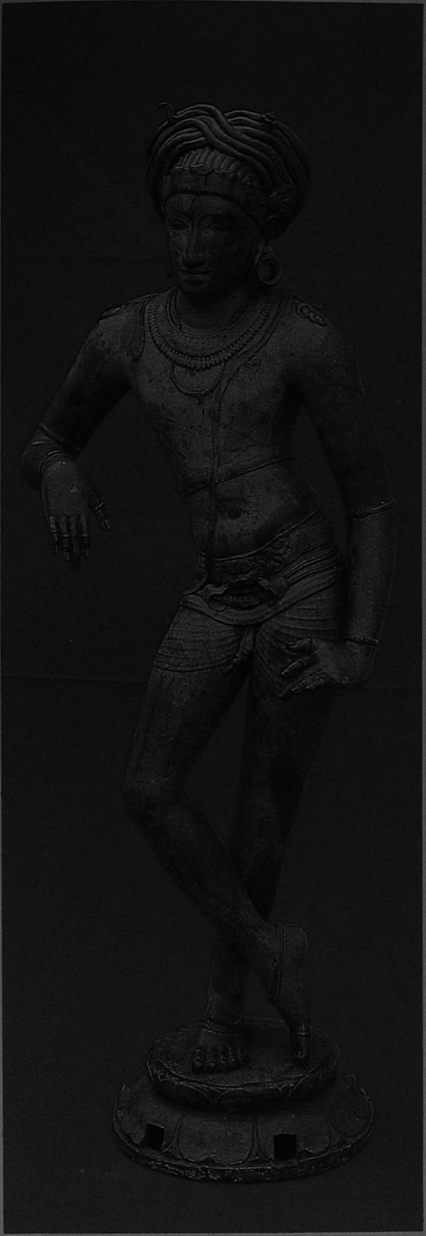
The worship of metal images, especially during festivals, when they were tastefully decorated, placed on mounts and carried in procession, fostered several other arts as well, such as garland making, special kinds of cloth wearing and manufacture of intricate jewellery. Chola inscriptions refer to the hundreds of jewels made and gifted to decorate these images, though unfortunately none have survived. Even the method of carrying an image was elevated into an art; the movements, like a dance could be soft and gentle, strong and vigorous with gentle pauses, all suited to the deity and the occassion. Together with the refined music and dance of the times, the Chola festivals must have presented a picture of celestial beauty delighting the body and the spirit at the same time. Many of these lost to the present days, though they are but pale reflections of the glory and intensity of the past.

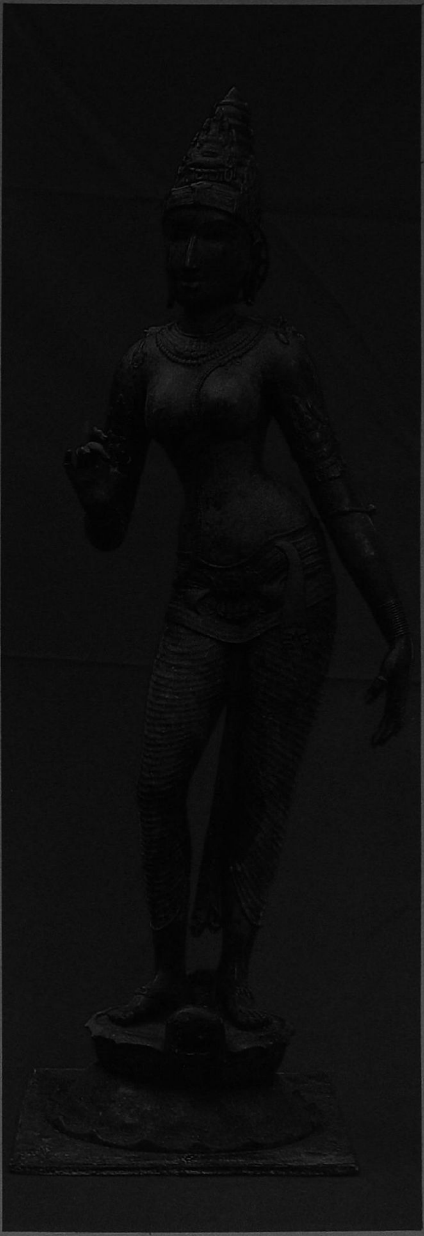


1a

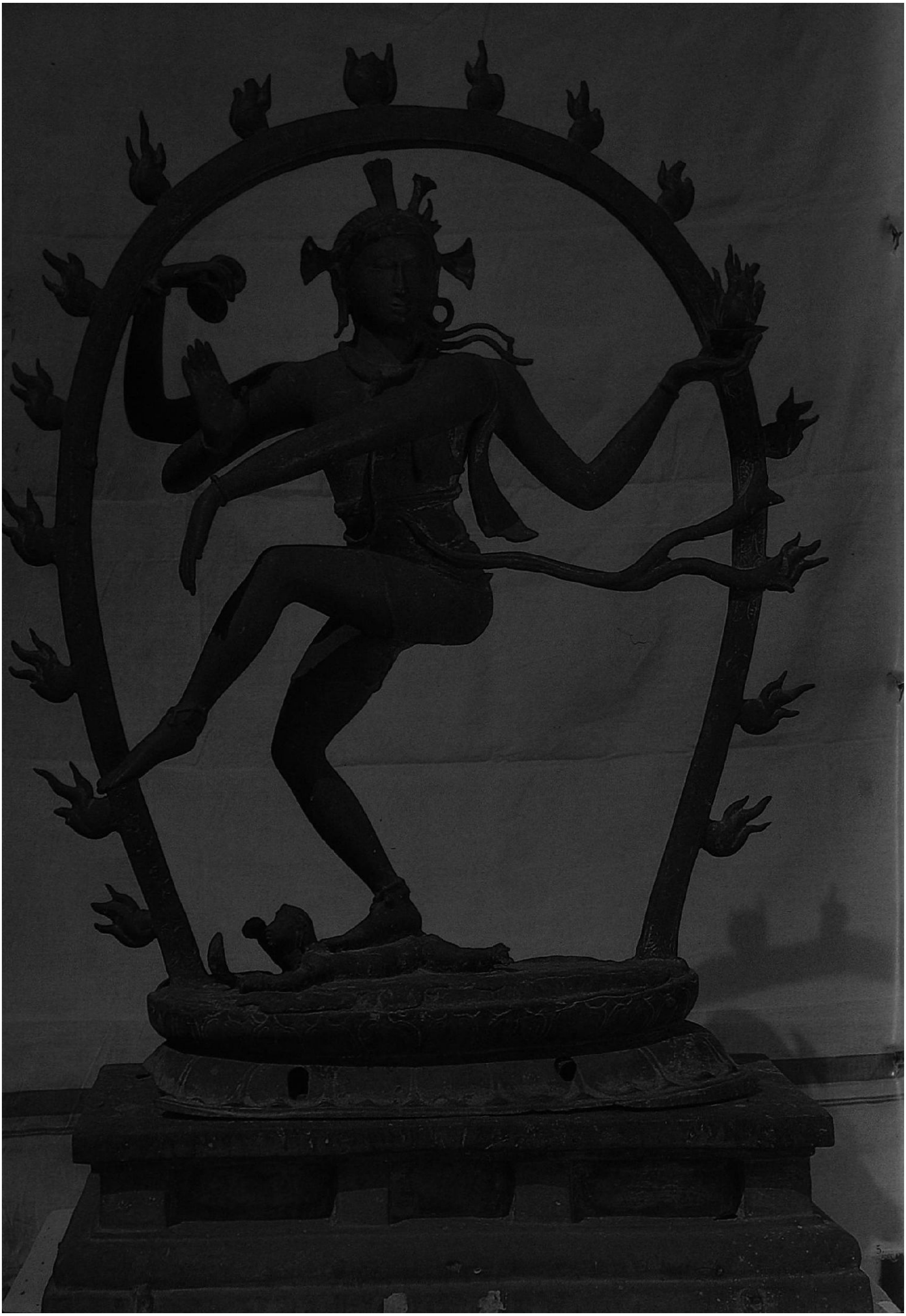
1a. Upper half (close-up) of 1

1. Kalyāṇasundara and Devī
Vaḍakalattur, c. A.D. 875



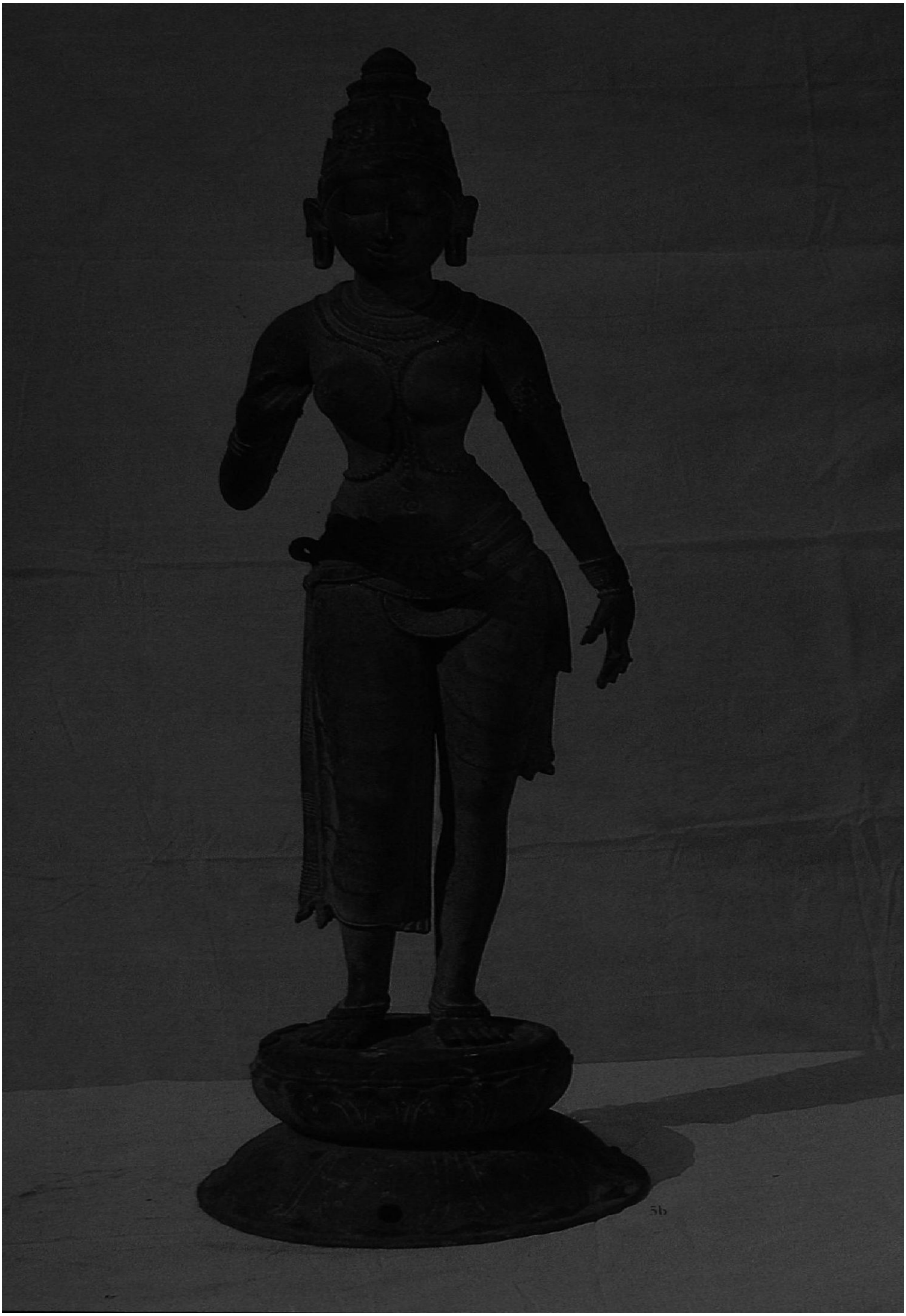


2. Vṛishavāhanadeva and Umā Parameśvarī, Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur, A.D. 1011 and 1012



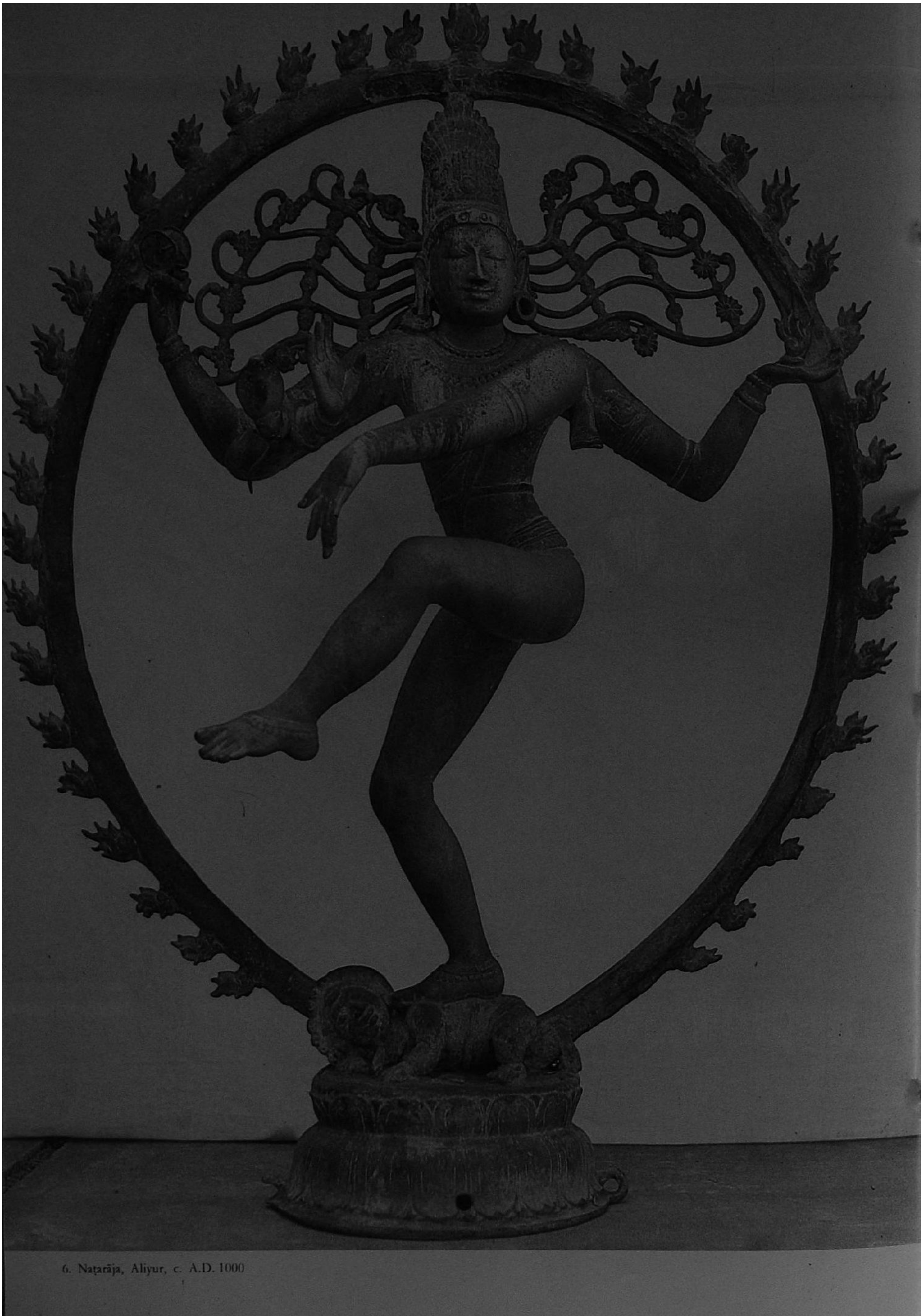
5a. Upper half of 5 (close-up).

◄ 5. Naṭarāja, Vaḍakalthur,
(Front view) c. A.D. 900


5b

8. Naṭarāja, Thiruvarangulam,
National Museum, New Delhi, c. A.D. 975.

◄ 5b. Śivakāmī of Vaḍakalttur Naṭarāja
c. A.D. 900



6. Naṭarāja, Aliyur, c. A.D. 1000

6a. Śivakāmī of Aliyur
Naṭarāja, c. A.D. 1000.

12. Triparāntaka, Thiruneipper. Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 875.

14 Tripurāntaka, National Museum, New Delhi, c. A.D. 970

15 Tripurāntaka, Thanjavur, c. A.D. 950.

15a. Vīṇādhara, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district, 10th century A.D.

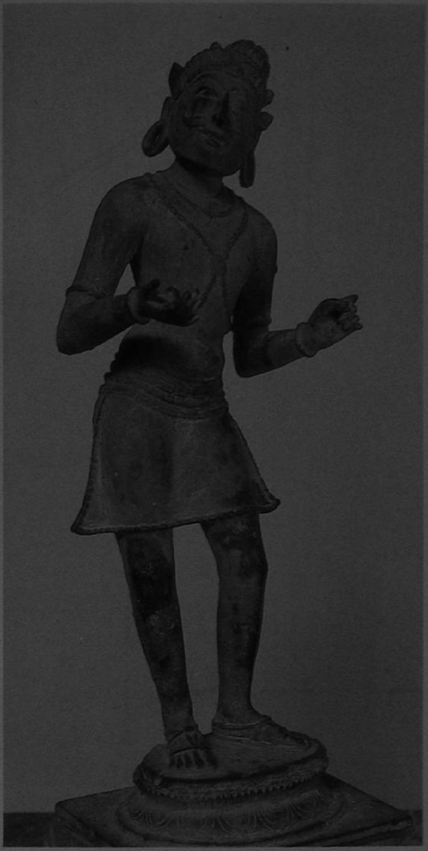
65. Śrī Rāma, Lakshamaṇa and Sītā, Paruthiyur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950

19. Sukhāsana Śiva, Kilaiyur village
Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 875

31. Śrīkaṇṭamūrti, Punjaiyur,
Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district,
10th century A.D.

29. Bhairava, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district. c. A.D. 925

30. Bhairava, Korukkai, Thanjavur district. c. A.D. 1000.

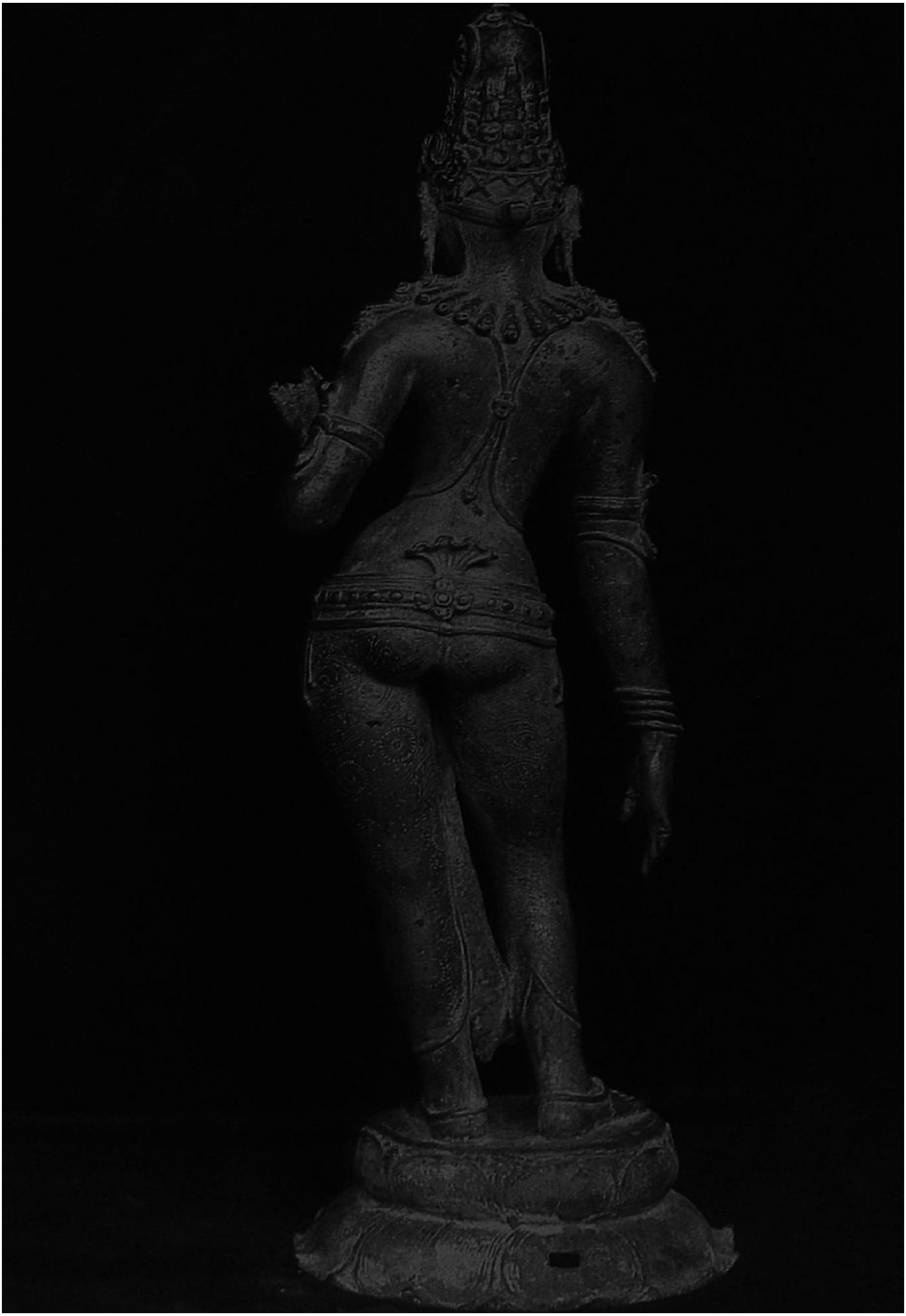


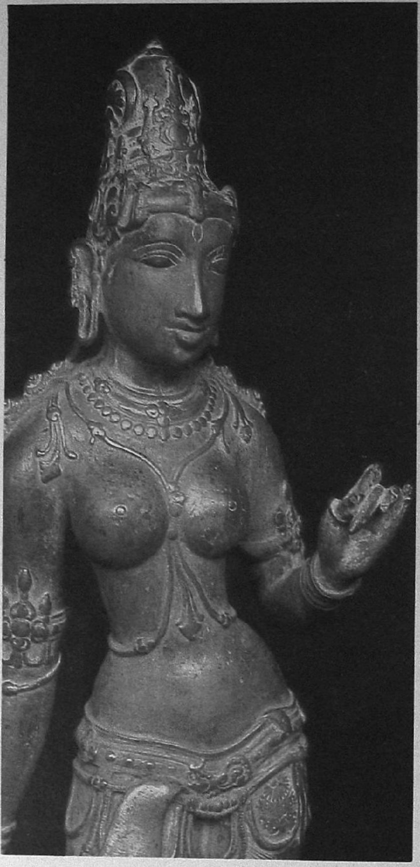
37. Kannappan, Thiruvenkadu,
Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 975

37a Back view of 37.

37b. Upper half (close-up) of 37

Inscribed Pārvati, (close-up), Karaivīram, Thanjavur district, A.D. 917.





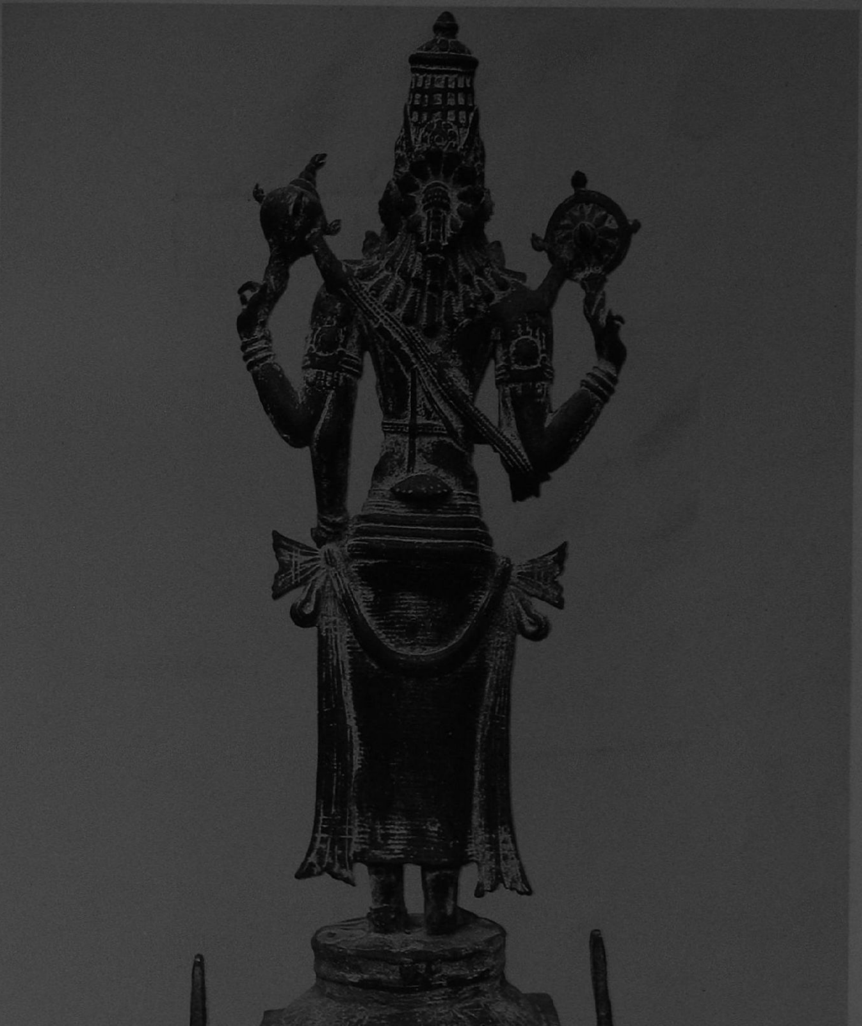
71b. Upper half (close-up) of 71

71c. Lower half (close-up) of 71

. Umā Nallur village, Thanjavur district; now in Thiruvidaimarudur
temple, c. A.D. 975 (Side view)
a. Back view of 71.

60. Vishṇu, Paruthiyur, now in Kodavasal, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 925

58. Vishṇu, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 750.



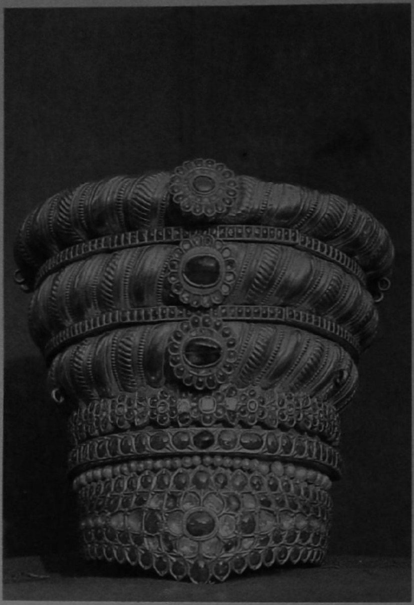
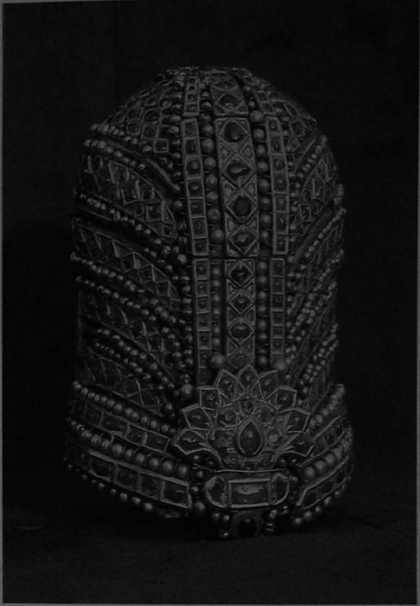
58a. Back view of 58.

41. Caṇḍikeśvara, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950

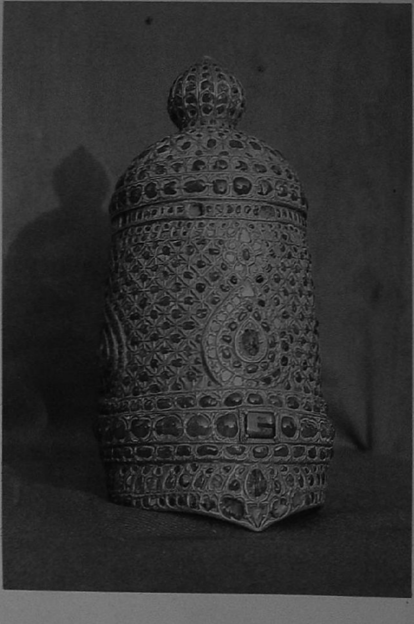
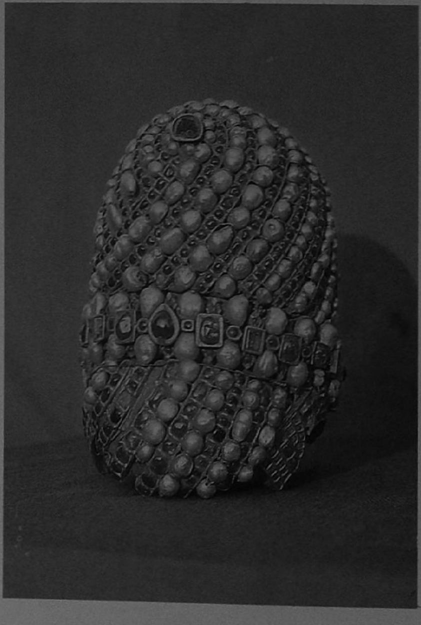
50. Gaṇeśa, Thiruthurai-ppundi, Pirvāmaruntisvara temple, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000

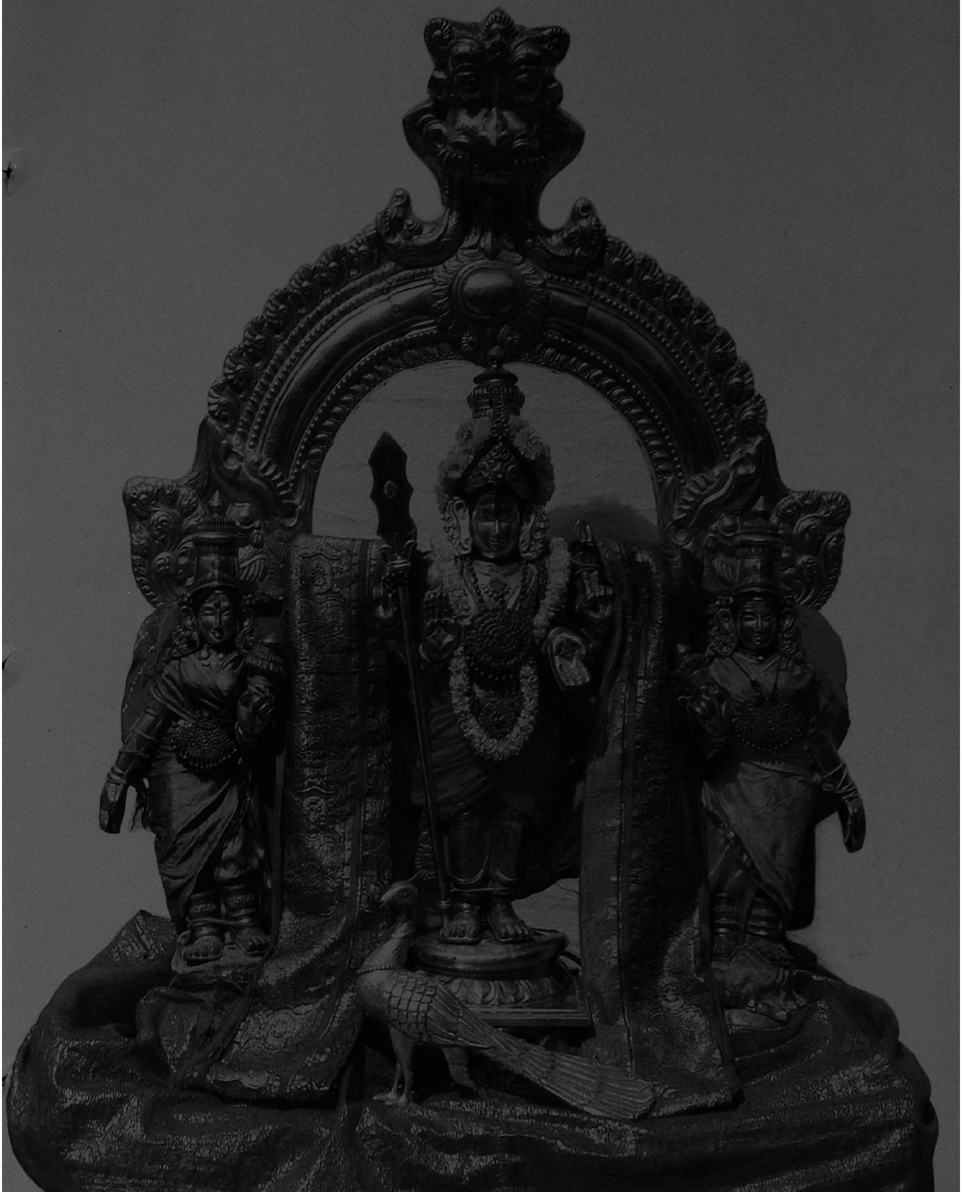
Makuṭas for the decoration of metal images

Subrahmaṇya (Śriṅgāravelar), Sikkal, Thanjavur district, decorated Processional image.

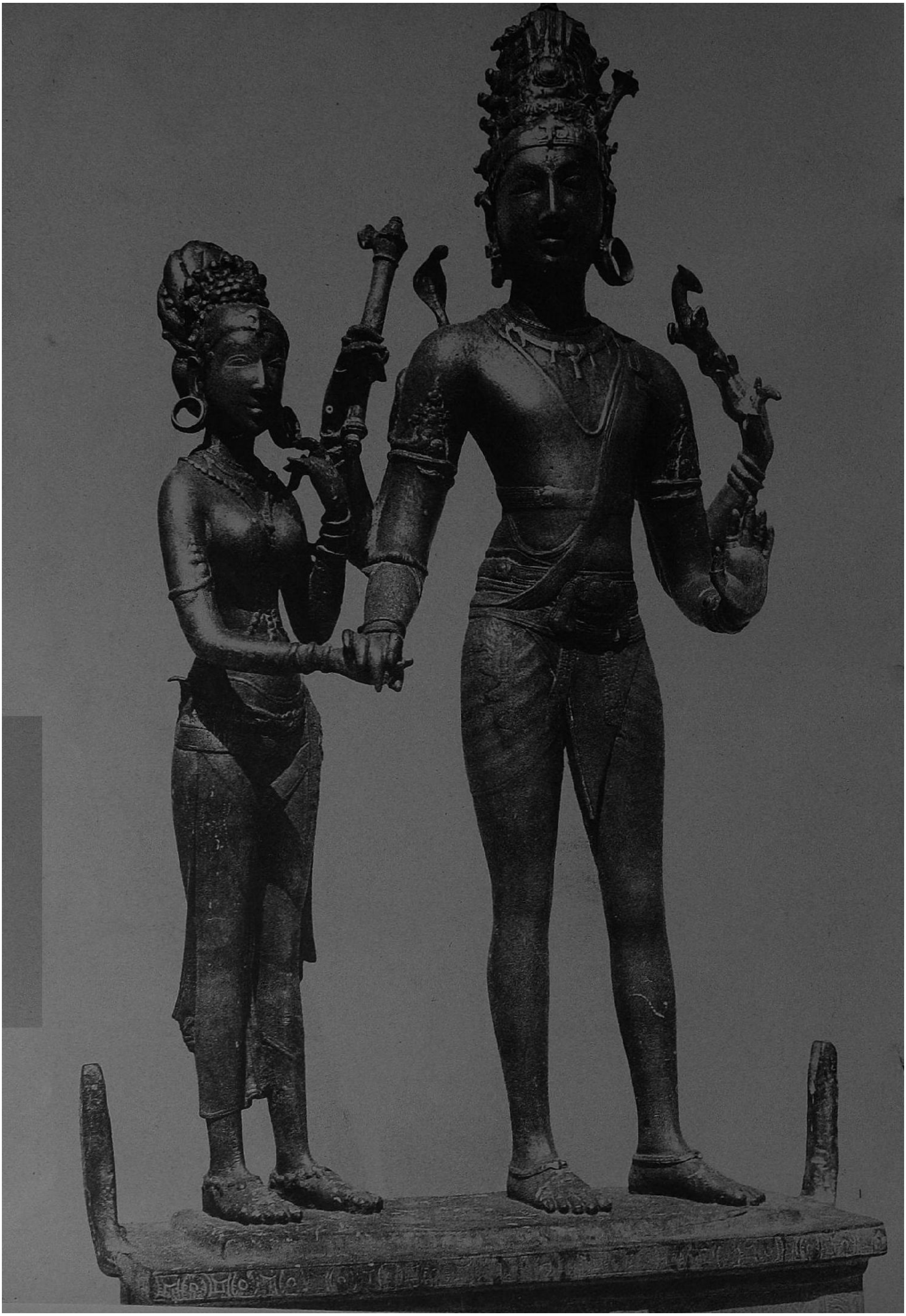
Makuṭas for the decoration of metal images



Subrahmaṇya (Śriṅgāravelar), Sikkal, Thanjavur district, decorated Processional image.

Catalogue



◀ 1. Kalyāṇasundara, Vaḍakkalattur (Front view).
2. (Back view of 1).

3. Upper half (close-up) of 1 (Front view).

4. Upper half (close-up) of 1 (Back view).

1

Kalyāṇasundara Śiva

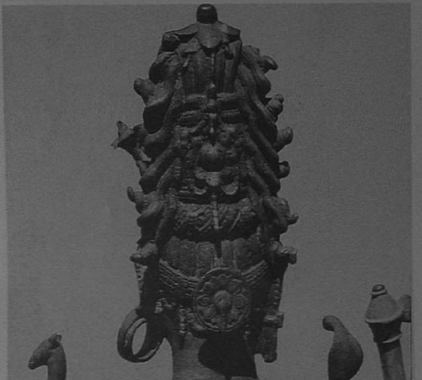
(Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī)
Ht. Śiva 90.5 cms.; Pārvatī 74.5 cms.
Later Pallava period, c. A.D. 875
From the Chidambareśvarar temple, Vaḍakkalattur,
Thanjavur District.

Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī, after she had won Him for husband by severe penance has been a favourite theme with the Indian Sculptor. The God, appearing as bridegroom, endowed with enchanting youth is called Kalyāṇasundara—the auspicious and the beautiful. A graphic description of Śiva's beauty and Pārvatī as a bride, is found in *Kumārasambhava*, the great poem of Kalidasa. The theme is also immortalised in a Tamil poem, assigned to 10th-11th century A.D. that speaks of the marriage of the Goddess Mīnākshī of Madurai, with Lord Sundareśvara, a localised version, which makes Pārvatī into the daughter of the Pandya king, who becomes the goddess Mīnākshī, ruler and presiding deity of the kingdom of Madurai. Her marriage with Śiva, the Sundara of Madurai, is extremely popular; the marriage itself being called Mīnākshī-kalyāṇam. Several literary compositions based on the theme of Mīnākshī-Kalyā-

5

6

5–7. Jaṭā (close-ups) of Kalyāṇasundara.



7

ṇam have come down, including the *Thiruvilaiyāḍalpurāṇam* (the sports of Śiva) by two eminent Tamil poets. Here Śiva's enchanting beauty and Pārvatī's bridal dress have been described with great joy. It is Vishṇu, we also learn, who gives Mīnākshī in marriage to Sundara, as is depicted in stone sculptures and wall paintings of the temple.

As the temples where Śiva is said to have performed one of the Saṁhāra acts, are called the Vīrasthānas, the temple of Madurai is identified as the place of marriage of Mīnākshī and Sundara. It is but natural, therefore, for the festival of Mīnākshī-kalyāṇam to be celebrated annually in Madurai on a very grand scale in the month of Chaitra (April). In temple worship throughout Tamilnadu, the celebration of this marriage festival (*kalyāṇa utsava*) is essential, every temple conducting this festival in a suitable way. The presence of several Kalyāṇasundaramūrti images in the Tamil country is but natural.

The Kalyāṇasundara image from Vaḍakkalattur is not

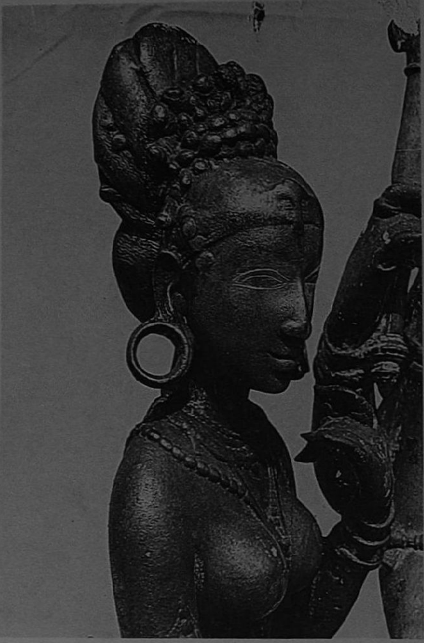
8

9

8–10. Devī of Kalyāṇasundara (close-ups).

10

merely the earliest bronze image of the subject so far known, but is also of the very finest quality, the *sthapati* being a supreme master who could evoke the most subtle expression by a tender handling of form. Sundara and Pārvatī are gently turned towards each other, the steady, Śiva confident and majestic Pārvatī, slender and yielding. Her legs, softer than the proverbial silk cotton (as often described in literature), are modelled with care particularly at the back. While Śiva's feet is adorned with *Kaḻal*, that of Pārvatī is beautified with *kiṅkiṇis*. Their lower garment is of a silken cloth, Pārvatī's extending below the knee and that of Śiva, covering only the upper leg. The front end of Śiva's lower garment falls as a triangle between the legs and is secured to the waist by several bands and a girdle with a jewelled buckle. Similarly the waist band of Pārvatī, less elaborate and pulled around the waist falls over the right thigh. In addition to the *upavīta* made of pearls, Śiva wears an *uttarīya* (upper garment) which hangs down to the waist, and is looped over the left shoulder. Of his three necklaces, one falls in a triangular shape over the chest, the other has drooping pendents while the third,



11

consisting of tiny beads, clasps the neck. Pārvatī wears a *channavīra* and a necklace of pearls, and a chain with pendents from which hangs a triangular chain falling between the breasts. Her hands are adorned with *keyūra* and prominent bangles. The left arm is bent, the extended right hand being held by Śiva. The *patrakuṇḍala* on her ears are large and prominent. Her coiffure consists of coils of hair twisted into a large S-shaped bun at the back and secured in the front with a band of three-stringed pearls. Śiva's coiffure consists of the usual *jaṭāmakuṭa*, here fairly elaborate with intricately arranged locks secured by three bands, one across the forehead, a garland and the third with *makara*-clasp in front and a lotus-like clasp at the back. The *jaṭāmakuta* is crowned by a multi-petalled flower, to the right the crescent moon and to the left a delicately made *ūmattai* flower. Śiva holds the axe in the right upper hand (the top of the axe is a later repair) and the antelope in the left (which had once broken off at the fingers, to be welded and rivetted at a later period). Both Śiva and Pārvatī wear a chain with large size *pippal*-leaf pendent on the back, hanging from the necklace. Śiva's front right arm holds Pārvatī's hand in the *pāṇigrahaṇa* pose and the left grants freedom from fear (*abhaya*). The *śiraścakra* at the back of Śiva's head is very small, no such feature being present in the image of Pārvatī.

Śiva is here presented as a figure of great majesty, supple, young and calm; Pārvatī, on the other hand, is bashful, tender and suffused by emotion, thus the broad, expanding chest and shoulders of Śiva, and Pārvatī's sweet and surrendering limbs are particularly appropriate. The divine

Kalyāṇasundara in his wedding dress and ornaments and in the delightful pose of taking to himself a bride (*pāṇigrahaṇa*) has been nowhere rendered, whether in stone or metal, with such consummate ease and such masterly understanding of the mood of the theme as in this great image from Vaḍakkalattur. There is here a certain freshness of appearance, a dignified charm, that even surpasses such famous Kalyāṇasundara images in metal from Konerirajapuram, Thiruvelvikkudi (of the Sembiyan Mahādevī period) and even the one from Thiruvenkadu (of the Rājarāja period). So overpowering is the aesthetic impact that even the eyes of Pārvatī, incised at a later period fail to detract from its intense impact. It may also be noted that while the Chola artists of a later age employed the *tribhaṅga* and other complicated postures to heighten the suppleness and beauty of the figures, the artists of the Vaḍakkalattur image achieved the most sophisticated expressiveness by the most gentle turns of body and face. (see Figs 1 to 16)

11. Coiffure (close-up) of Devī.

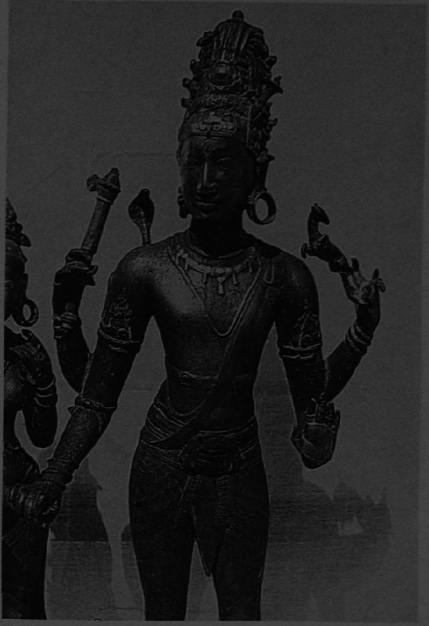
12. Coiffure (close-up) of Devī.

13. Back (close-up) of Devī.

14. Kalyāṇasundara (close-up).

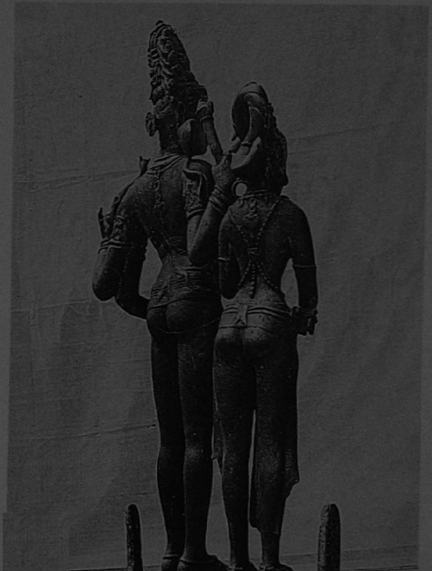
15. Kalyāṇasundara and Devī (side view).

16. Kalyāṇasundara and Devī (another side view).



14

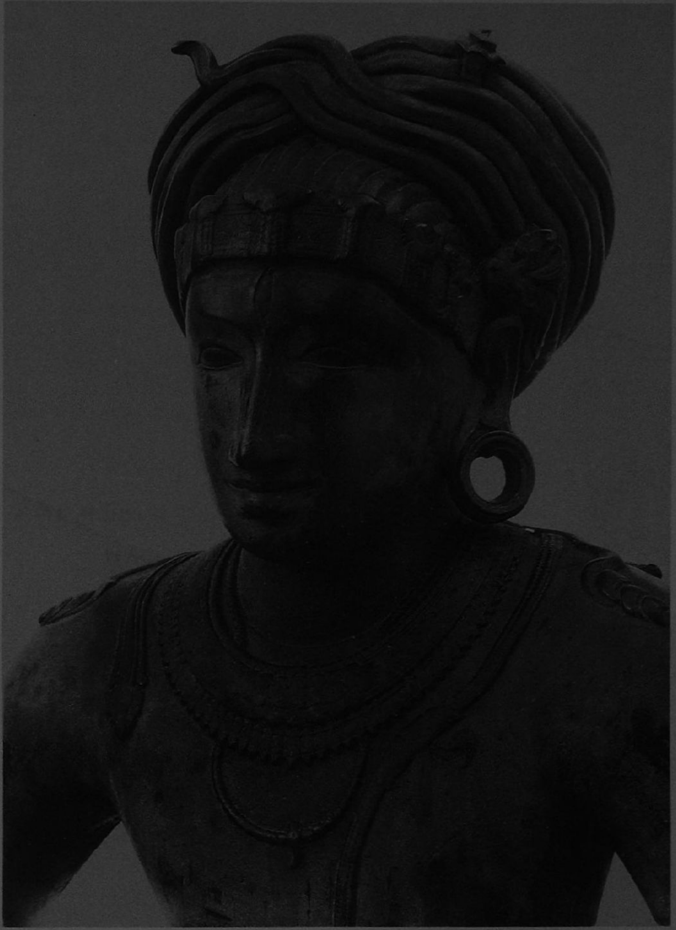
15



17. Vrishavāhanadeva and Umā Parameśvarī Thiruvenkadu (front view).

18. Head detail of Vṛishavāhanadeva

19–21. Legs (close-ups) of Vṛishvāhanadeva.



18

19

20

21

22. Umā Parameśvarī, Thiruvenkadu (Front view).

2
Vṛishavāhanadeva and Umā Parameśvarī

Ht. Śiva 108 cms.; Umā 93 cms.
Early Chola period, Śiva A.D. 1011, Umā A.D. 1012
Found burried in the Śvetāraṇyesvara temple, Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur.

The God stands with the weight of his body thrown on the left leg, right leg carried gracefully. He wears a short undergarment, fastened to the waist by a broad band, which has a large lion-face clasp. Other ornaments are subdued. The right arm is bent as though placed on the head of the bull, the left is placed on the thigh. The matted locks are coiled skilfully around the head as a turban, the eyes shining with inward joy. The accompanying figure of Umā Parameśvarī stands in *tribhaṅga*, the Devī appropriately bedecked with jewellery including an elbow ornament. Like Śiva, the Goddess also wears an *upavīta* but her hair rises in a *karaṇḍa makuṭa*, elaborate ornament in the front. Her right hand gently holds a flower, the face turned slightly towards her Lord.

An inscription in the temple, dated in the 26th year, A.D. 1011, of Rājarāja, mentions that a person named Kolakkāvan set up the copper image of Vṛishavāhanadeva, in the temple of Venkadu Uḍaiyār (Thiruvenkadu temple) for which purpose some gold money was gifted. In the next year A.D. 1012, some other persons made and consecrated an image of Umā Parameśvarī, the consort of Vṛishavāhanadeva. Thus, these two outstanding metal images can be dated precisely with the help of inscriptions in the reign of Rājarāja. (See Figs. 17 to 31)

23. Head (close-up) of 22 (Back view).

Several metal images of Vṛishavāhanadeva, of fine workmanship have come to light. Within two miles from Thiruvenkadu, is the village of Pallavanīśvaram (the ancient port of Kaveripumpattinam) where an earlier group of Vṛishavāhana and consort are still in worship. In the Konerirājapuram temple, is a Vṛishavāhana group, which is a beautiful example of the Sembiyan Mahādevī School. An image of great elegance of the same theme is the Vṛishavāhana under worship in Kilvelur temple of the Rājarāja school (C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, Pls. 1 and 2). These are all masterpieces of the Chola age, but the Vṛishavāhana from Thiruvenkadu is unsurpassed in its beauty. Thiruvenkadu, a village on the coast, near the mouth of Kaveri, in Thanjavur district has yielded other outstanding images. Most of them belong to the Rājarāja school, while a few are earlier, and interestingly enough a number of them are datable with the help of inscriptions. The images of Chaṇḍeśvara, Kannappa, Ardhanārīśvara, Bhikshāṭtana, Kalyāṇasundara, Kshetrapāla, Somāskanda, and Brahmādhirāya are among the more important of the more that forty examples among which Bhikshāṭana, Ardhanārīsvāra are also datable to A.D. 1045 and 1047 on the basis of inscriptions.

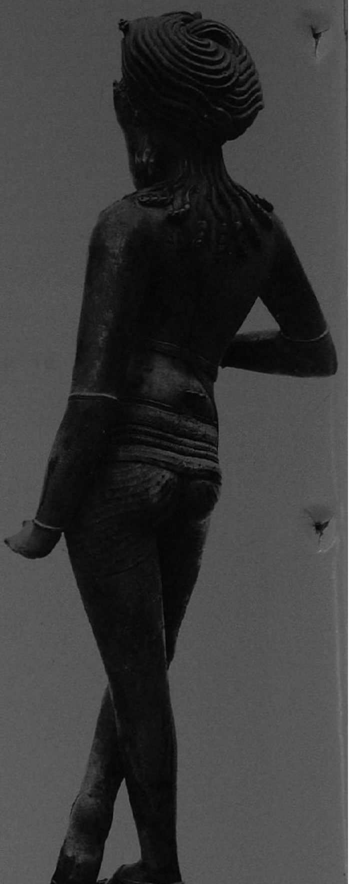
Metal images belonging to the later Chola age have also been discovered from the village and among these an image of Subrahmaṇya called Davarkal Nāyaka deva, with his consorts, in an inscription is noteworthy. Evidently a great family of *sthapatis* (metal sculptors) lived in the village and were active in the reign of Rājarāja and his successors.

24. Head (close-up) of 22 (Side view).

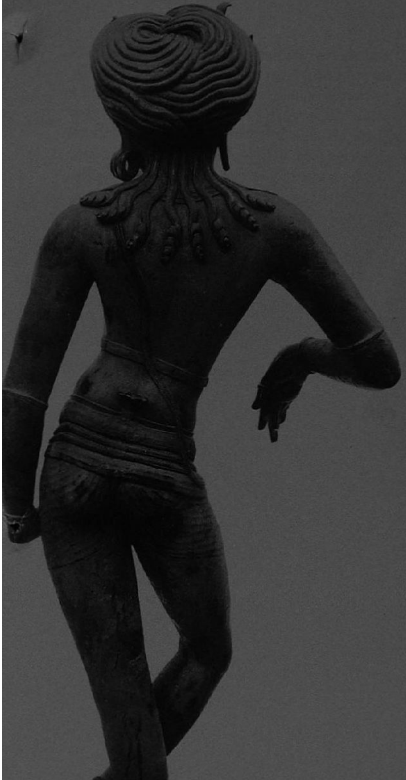
25. Umā Parameśvari (Back view).

26

27



28



29

30

31

26–31. Vrishavāhanadeva (different angles).

32

3
Vṛishavāhana Śiva
(Śiva accompanied by his bull)
Ht. 87.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 995
From Kalyāṇasundareśvara temple, Nallur, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Mahālingaswami temple, Thiruvidaimarudur. Thanjavur district.

The two armed Śiva, the third eye clearly shown, the left arm raised as if to be placed over the head of the bull, and the right in the gesture of holding a staff has the appearance of a charming youth in the figure. The *tribhaṅga* is gentle, the face serene. The *paṭṭa* broad, and covers much of the forehead. The *jaṭāmakuṭa*, has a long *makara*-clasp, the crescent moon, the *ūmattai* flower, and a little snake. Though the image is locally called Kalyāṇasundara, it is really that of Vṛishavāhana as Kātchi Koḍutta Nāyaka. (See Fig. 32)

32. Vṛishavāhana Śiva, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district

33. Vṛishavāhanadeva Śiva, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.

33

4
Vṛishavāhaṇa Śiva
(Śiva accompanied by the bull)
Ht. 85.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 1050.
From the Maruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi,
Thanjavur district.

The ultimate boon sought by a devotee of Śiva from the God is that he be releived from the bondage of life and be allowed to remain constantly in the immediate presence of the Supreme. While granting this boon, Śiva invariably appears to the devotee in the company of his consort Umā, either riding on his bull or with it standing by his side. In this aspect the divinities are called Vṛishavāhanadeva and Umābhaṭṭārakī, the Tamil nomenclatures, particularly such a portrayal in Thanjavur district being Kātchikoḍutta Nāyakar.

This iconographic type, either appears with two or four arms, the left arm resting over the head of the bull, the right hand holding a staff. The upper arms hold the axe and the antelope. The present image is a fine example, though the bull is missing, impressing us by its dignity and grace. (See Fig. 33; cf. also Figs. 34 to 37)

34. Vṛishavāhana Śiva, Chidambaram (Front view).

35. Upper half (close-up) of 34 (Front view).

34

35

36. Upper half (close-up) of 34 (Back view).

37. Vṛishavāhana Śiva, Chidambaram (Back view).

37

36

Śiva is the creator, sustainer, dispellor of ignorance, grantor of solace and destroyer—the five essential acts called *pañcakrityas*. The lord creates but also destroys, destruction being recognised in the Śaiva Siddhānta as not only the end but also the beginning (*antam ādi* i.e. *anta* is *ādi*). His is the cosmic dance (*ūlikkūttu*); His is the dance that destroys all (*samasta sambāra tāṇḍava*); His is the dance of knowledge (*jñāna kūttu*); and above all His is the dance of bliss—(the *paramānanda tāṇḍava*). According to the Āgamic texts, the upper sphere—the space above the Liṅga in the sanctum should be worshipped as *ākāśa*, the supreme and tranquil space where the blissful dance takes place.

Śiva as Nṛitteśa is portrayed high on the front face of the main temple (*prāsāda*) for his dance takes place high in the cosmos. It is placed on the south, for it is as Rudra that he dances the Ānanda Tāṇḍava. The metal images of Naṭarāja, installed in sub-shrines inside the temple thus also face the south. The great temple of Chidambaram also faces the south.

The image of Naṭarāja as visualised by the Tamil artists of the Chola age, finds inspiration in Upanishadic thought and more immediately in the imagery and tradition of Tamil Devaram hymns. Appar, for example, sings of the dance in the following words:

'The hide of the black buck as garment worn,
The little bells on the feet resonating with the tinkling sound,
The consuming fire in the hand, held by
Long and sturdy arms swaying in rhythm
The charming Umā beholds the Lord tenderly
And the adoring celestials standing witness
The graceful and blissful dance, the Lord performs
At Perumbarrappuliyur, the sacred place renowned,
To sing his glories, or not to be born.'

Naṭaraja's benign smile, while he dances has inspired the saints and singers throughout the period.

Sundaramūrti Nayanar calls the dance the very summit of bliss (*ānanda ellai*), while yet another Devāram hymn extols the Lord of the dance as the essence of knowledge, the very meaning of the sacred Vedas, the truth extending beyond the comprehension of all, sweet as honey and milk, effulgent light, embracing the fire and air, the roaring ocean and the lofty peak, the very creator and sustainer, the Lord of Perumbarrappuliyur."

Upanishadic thoughts also found expression in the interpretation of the Ānanda Tāṇḍava. Thus Śrīkanṭa Śambhu, who lived in the 12th century A.D. at Chidambaram, wrote a commentary on *Brahmasūtra* known as *Śrīkanṭa bhāshya* where he defines the concept of the cosmic dance in terms of the Upanishads. The entire universe, says the sacred śruti, comes into existence from *ākāśa*, is sustained by *ākāśa* and is ultimately resolved into *ākāśa*. The terms *ambara* and *ākāśa* are synonyms. The world Chidambaram means *child-ākāśa*, the consciousness in the heart of the individual soul, where the dance takes place. Another upanishadic statement makes *ākāśa* and *ānanda* synonymous. *Ānanda* means bliss. It is from *Ānanda* (bliss) that the world comes into being, it is sustained by *Ānanda*, and resolved into *Ānanda* and that *Ānanda* is Brahman, the supreme bliss. Thus the nature of supreme, according to Srīkanṭa, has to be identified with the Ānanda Tāṇḍava.

Lord Śiva's dance is symbolic of the five acts; creation is set off by the initial vibration caused by the sound of the *ḍamaru* (drum) held in his right hand, protection by the *abbaya mudrā* of the front right arm, the ignorance dispelled by the dwarfish figure trampled below right leg, the lifted arm which points to the lifted leg is the solace of the worlds, while the fire in the left arm dissolves universe. The circular aureole represents the cosmos, the glowing Sun, the moon, the stars and all of Nature revolving in perpetual motion. Pārvatī as Śivakāmī, is the witness to this Cosmic activity, rather the inspirer of the divine sport of the Lord. Thus it is necessary for every Naṭarāja image to be invariably accompanied by Śivakāmasundarī. The Naṭarāja in the great temple of Thanjavur for example has Śivakāmi by the side of the bull, witnessing the Ānanda Tāṇḍava. Of other metal images of the early Chola age that have survived one may mention a fine figure of the Devī with the Naṭarāja from Vaḍakkalattur and another from Aliyur both included in the exhibition.

38. Naṭarāja, Vaḍakkalattur, Thanjavur district (Front view).

38

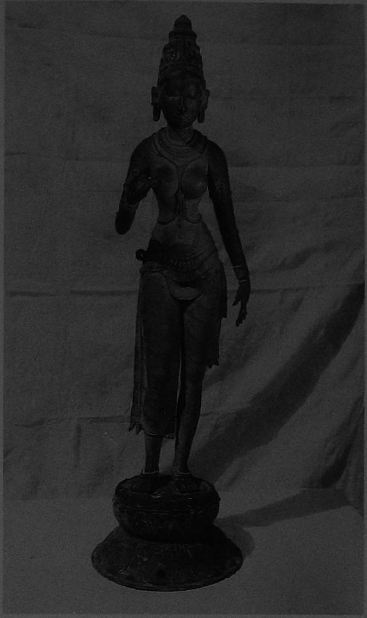
39

39. Naṭarāja, Vaḍakkalattur (Back view).

5.
Naṭarāja and Śivakāmī
(Śiva, Lord of the dance and his consort)
Ht. Naṭarāja 97.5 cms.; Śivakāmī 71.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. 900 A.D.
From Chidambareśvara temple, Vaḍakkalattur, Thanjavur district.

This is perhaps the earliest surviving bronze image of Naṭarāja placing a slight emphasis on width and horizontality of form. Siva's right leg is placed firmly on the back of the *apasmāra*, almost squeesing the dwarf flat, the creature struggling to raise his head as he grasps a snake in the left hand. Śiva's ankles are adorned with tinkling bells. The lifted left leg points sharply downwards at an angle. The palm of the left arm pulled across the body hangs loosely from the wrist, suggestive of natural movement, rather than pointing to the lifted leg as is common in other figures. The long and thin sash draped around the body flutters out beyond the *thiruvāsi* (*prabhāmaṇḍala*). The upper right hand holding the drum touches the *prabhā*, while the fire in the upper left hand rests in a cup. An early feature in the bronze are the fan-like ends of the face-band standing out on both sides of the head and a flat ribbon like projection from the central part of the head. At the back, the matted locks of hair, move downwards over the back (Tamil *tāl saḍai*) rather than flowing out on the sides.

The image closely resembles a similar representation in stone in a temple dated around A.D. 900 bearing inscriptions from the very beginning of Pārāntaka Chola reign, and also those of the later Pallavas like Tellaru Erinda Nandi, and

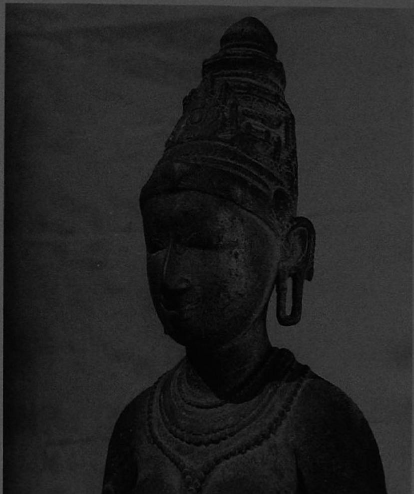


40

41

Nṛipatungavarman. It can also, therefore, be dated to the same time. Incidentally the earliest epigraphical reference to the Ānanda Tāṇḍava form of Śiva, also occurs early in the 10th century A.D. during the reign of Parāntaka Chola.

Vaḍakkalattur village, from where this Naṭarāja comes (See Figs. 38 to 42) has also yielded an outstanding Kalyāṇasundara image.



42

40. Śivakāmī of Vaḍakkalattur Naṭarāja (Front view).

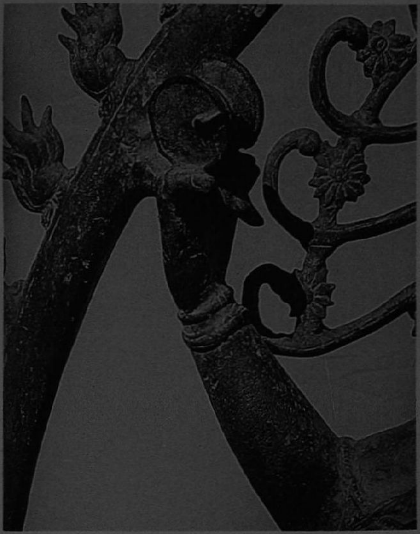
41. Śivakāmī of Vaḍakkalattur Naṭarāja (Back view).

42. Upper half detail of 40.

43. Naṭarāja, Aliyur, Thanjavur district.

43

66



44

45

6.
Naṭarāja and Śivakami
(Śiva, lord of dance and his consort)
Ht. Naṭarāja 113.5 cms.; Śivakāmī 84 cms.
Early Chola period, c. 1000 A.D.
From Kankālaṇātha temple, Aliyur village, Thanjavur district.
Now in Singaravelar temple, Sikkal. Thanjavur district.

46

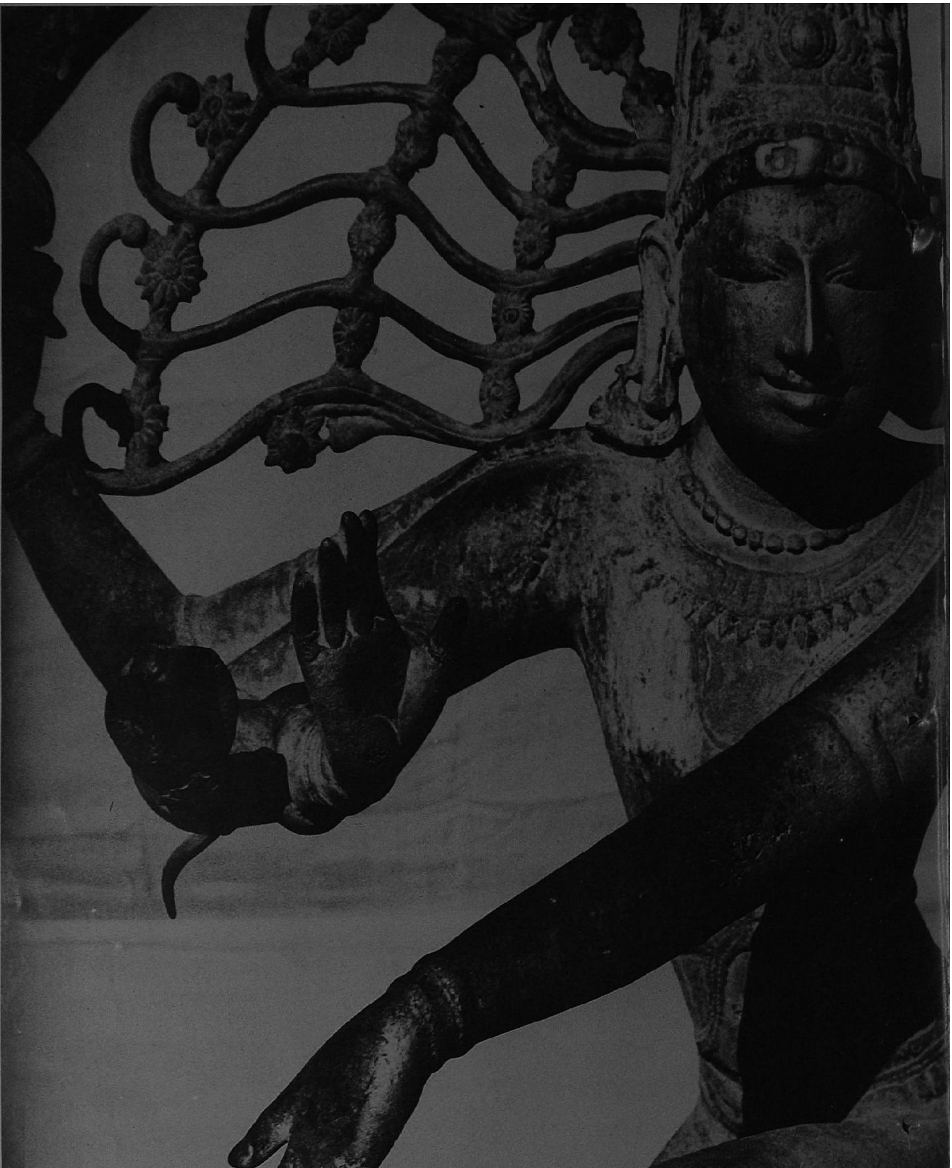
44. Ḍamaru (close-up) of 43.
45. Fire (close-up) of 43.
46. Lifted leg (close-up) of 43.

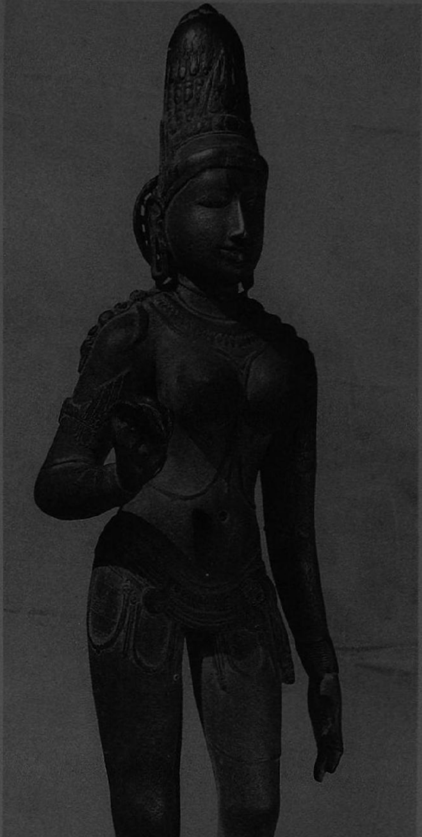
The reign of Rājarāja Chola witnessed the production of lārge numbers of Naṭarāja images, several of great size. As many as four Naṭarāja figures are recorded to have been made for the great temple of Thanjavur in the reign of Rājarāja himself, two of which have survived to this day, the larger one now under worship in the temple being the finest representation in metal. Rājarāja was greatly devoted to this form of Śiva dancing, a form which he affectionately called Āḍavallān, the master dancer. Even the standard weights and measures of the temple were called Āḍvallār. This attachment to the Ānanda Naṭarāja form is to be further seen in the representation of the 108 *tāṇḍava* forms, carved around the upper tier of the main sanctum of Great temple at Thanjavur.

In his devotion to Naṭarāja, Rājarāja was inspired by Saint Appar (seventh century A.D.) whose Devāram hymns repeatedly extol the bewitching smile of the dancing Śiva.

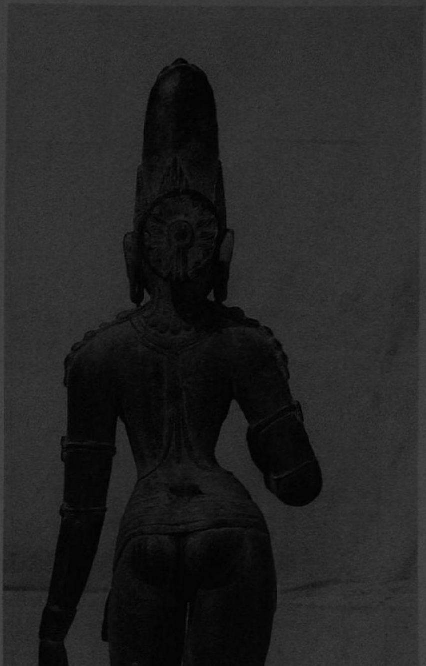
"When the lifted leg of the Master is beheld,
the quivering brows
the captivating smile on the lips
the matted locks whirling
the body smeared with ashes white
will thine mortal coil remain,"
sings Appar (*Kovvai Cevvāyil Kumin Cirippum*).

This bewitching smile on the lips, is emphasised in the Naṭarāja figures of the Rājarāja period, the present example from Aliyur being a fine and very large example of the type. The vigorous movement within the circular *prabhāmaṇḍala* is not without restraint and balance and the image replete with delicate modelling and decorative touches is certainly the work of a great master. The accompanying figure of Śivakāmī in the full bloom of youth is a graceful one, the legs held slightly apart, suggestive of gentle movement. The high *keśamakuṭa* adds further dignity to the image as does the gentle smile which reflects that of Naṭarāja and is at the same time expressive of the inward joy of the Goddess, the primary spectator of the cosmic dance. (See Figs. 43 to 49)





48



49

47. Right half (close-up) of 43.

48. Śivakāmī of Aliyur Naṭarāja (Side view).

49. Śivakāmī of Aliyur Naṭarāja (Back view).

50. Naṭarāja, Kunniyur, Madras Government Museum (Front view).

7
Naṭarāja
Ht. 116 cms.
Early Chola period; c. A.D. 950
Treasure Trove find, Kunniyur village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Madras Government Museum.

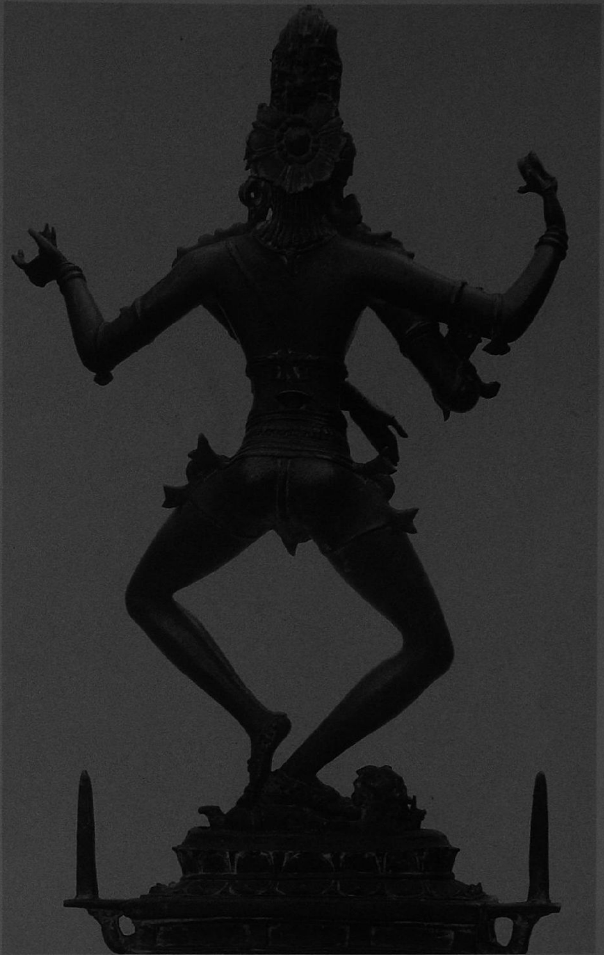
The present figure from Kunniyur is a fine and imposing figure of Naṭarāja of the Early Chola age found as a treasure trove. The accompanying figure of Devī has not been found. Every detail of the figure has been done with great attention and delicacy. The head dress, the face band, the garland of *konrai* flowers taken around the head, the *ūmattai* flower, the crescent moon, are of marvellous workmanship, testimony to the requisite attention to detail paid to the image even in the wax stage. The absolute balance, dignity and individuality of these minor parts, standing out delicately speak about the skill and ability of the early Chola artist. The face has the exquisite expression for which the Chola artists are known. It is reflective of the great *yogin*, filled with innate joy and happiness enchanting the onlooker. Serene, sobre, and evoking the noblest of sentiments in the spectator, the figure is to be ranked among the masterpieces of early Chola period. The lovely necklace, worn by the Lord, specially detailed, may also be noticed. The matted locks flowing on either side are missing. There is minor damage to some of the arms as well. The leg trampling the *apasmāra purusha* conveys the weight of the entire gyrating body on the helpless creature who is squeezed and flattened, the agony expressed by the tense and opened mouth. The snake held by him looks into the eyes of the dwarf. The mystic sound (*nāda*) of the bells, heard by the Śiva *yogin*, leads to the blissful state, often referred to as Nādānta Tāṇḍava, of which this figure is a masterly representation. (see Figs. 50 and 51)

51. Apasmārapurush of 50.

52

52. Naṭarāja, Thiruvarangulam, National Museum, New Delhi (Front view).

53. Back view of 52.



53

8
Naṭarāja
Ht. 71.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 975
From Thiruvarangulam Village, Pudukottai District.
Now in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Under worship in the Thiruvarangulam temple, till very recent times, the present image of Śiva in *catura tāṇḍava* pose is a delightful figure of the theme, of the Sembiyan Mahādevī School. While the arms are as found in usual Naṭarāja images, the legs form a square—*Catura*—the right leg pressing the *apasmāra purusha* on his neck; the left leg is lifted up, with the toe touching the back of the dwarf in *sūchī* pose. The *catura tāṇḍava* from, though common in stone particularly in the north, they are rare in metal, only a few have come to light so far, like the ones from Kodumundi, and Kumara vayalur. (see Figs. 52–53)

54

54. Naṭarāja, Śivaganga, Thirumalai Nayakar Palace Museum, State Department of Archaeology, Madras.

55. Back view of 54

55

9

Naṭarāja

(Śiva, Lord of the dance)
Ht. 81.5 cms.
Early Chola Period, c. A.D. 975
From Sivaganga,
Now in the Thirumalai Nayakar Palace Museum, Madurai, under Tamilnadu State Archaeology Department.

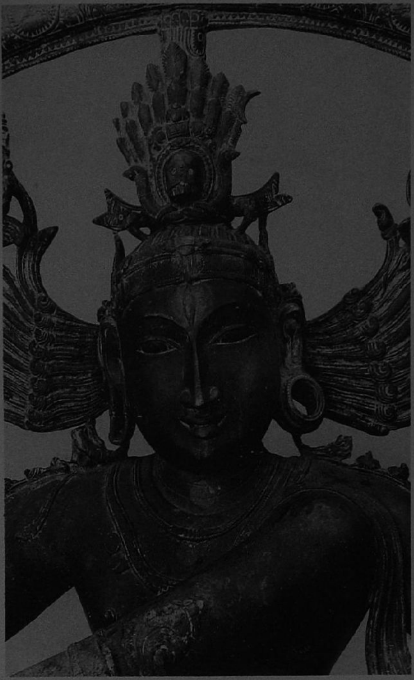
The Pandya country in the south of Tamilnadu was brought under Chola rule in the reign of Parāntaka in the first quarter of the 10th century A.D. Ever since it was the Chola idiom that came to prevail in this area as is to be seen in this Naṭarāja image which comes from Sivaganga in the Pandya area but is in the Chola style of the Sembiyan Mahādevī school. Another fine example of which is the Thiruvarangulam Naṭarāja. We may note that Sembiyan Mahādevī was the mother of Uttam Chola, who assumed the title Madurāntaka, conqueror of the Madurai country. (see Figs. 54–55)

56

10
Naṭarāja
Ht. 118.5 cms
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1150.
From Kumbhakonam, Thanjavur District.

It was the age when the Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram was receiving great attention in the hands of the Chola emperors. Lord Naṭarāja of Chidambaram, is called in inscriptions the family deity—the *Kuladevatā,* in whose presence the Chola emperors crowned temselves. The great Gopuras were being built, with Bharata's Nāṭya *karaṇas* immortalised in stone. Falling into schematic pattern and confirming to iconographic norms, the present Naṭarāja is a figure of great proportions. The *prabhā maṇḍala* falling into three well defined circles, issued from the mouths of huge *makaras*—one on either side. There is perfect balance in the forms of legs and arms. The flowing *jaṭās* are interspersed with strings of flowers. The Gaṅgā emerges from a loop of the *jaṭā* in the upper right. The head ornaments are worked with great attention. (see Figs 56 to 61).

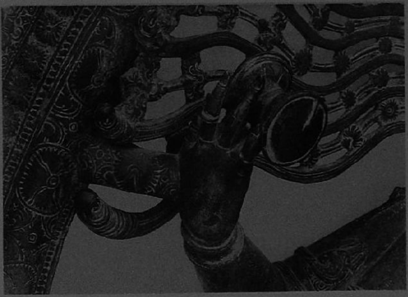
57



58

59

56. Naṭarāja, Kumbeśvara temple, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur district.
57–61. Details of 56.
62. Naṭarāja, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district.



60

61

62

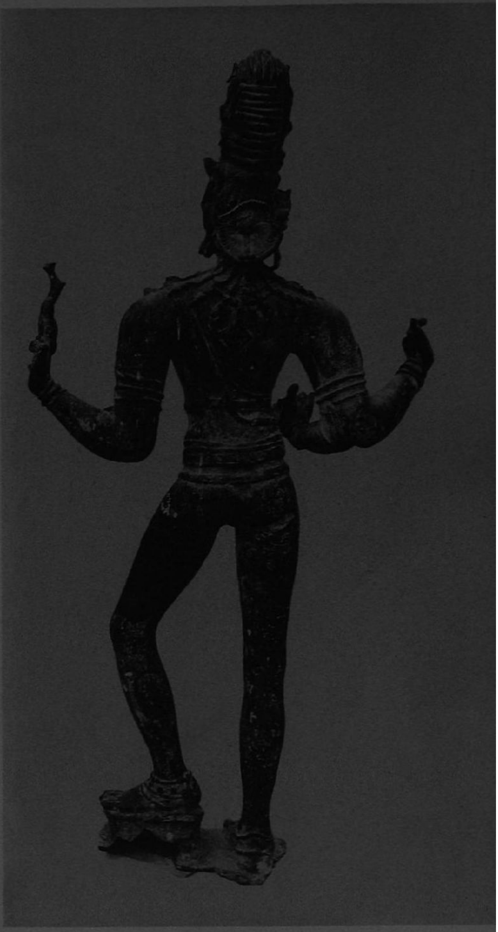
63. Tripurāntaka, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 875 (Front view)

12
Tripurāntaka
(Śiva, destroyer of the three cities)
Ht. 100 cms.
Late Pallave period, c. A.D. 875
From Thiruneipper.
Now in the Thyāgarāja temple, Thiruvarur, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 189

When Śiva set out to destroy the impregnable three cities of the demons, he stood on a chariot of which the Vedas were the houses, Brahmā, the charioteer. *Pināka* bow in hand, he let loose the fiery bow, releasing the demons from ignorance to immortality.

Temples dedicated to the heroic exploits of Śiva are called *vīrastbānas* and eight such temples are celebrated in the Tamil country. Of these the one at Thiruvadigai, South Arcot district, is dedicated to Śiva as the destroyer of the three cities and famous for its car procession with an image of Tripurāntaka. The Chola kings were particularly devoted to this aspect of Śiva and they instituted car festivals in many temples. The Tripurāntaka aspect is also repeatedly portrayed on temples of the Chola period notably sculptures of the upper tier of the great temple of Thanjavur and the magnificant mural on its inner walls. Vikrama Chola had a car made and also arranged for the car festival at Chidambaram in the twelfth century A.D. The last of the great Chola emperors, Kulottunga III, in an allusion to Śiva Tripurāntaka assumed the title Tribhuvanavīradeva to mark his conquests. When he captured Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas, he arranged for a special festival to honour Tripurāntaka, stationed himself on the streets in order to offer worship like an ordinary citizen.

Besides the Cholas, the earlier Pallavas also appear to have been devotees of the Tripurasamhāra aspect. Metal images of Tripurāntaka Śiva have survived from the late Pallava age, a fine example, now in the Gautam Sarabhai collection, Ahmedabad, being well-known. The present Tripurāntaka from Neipper exhibited here is also of the Pallava period, possessing all the characteristics of ninth century sculpture. The God stands with the right leg placed on the pedestal, the left raised and planted on a lotus foot-rest. An anklet and a chain with little bells adorn the feet. The lower left and right hands are in gestures suggesting that they hold a bow and arrow respectively. The upper right hand holding the axe is slightly damaged while the upper left holds the antelope. The *upavīta* is broad, the neck-chains long and reaching to the chest. The waist band is at a slightly higher level than is usual. The *jaṭāmakuṭa* is quite tall, the hair largely arranged in horizontal plaits, curled locks falling over the necklaces at the back, one of these provided with diamond shaped pendent. The *śiraścakra* with a lion head in the centre, is broken at the top. (see Figs. 63 and 64)



64. Back view of 63

65

66

13
Tripurāntaka
(Śiva destroyer of the three cities)
Ht. 91 cms.
Late Pallava period, c. A.D. 875
From Ponvilaintanpatti village. Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur.
Acc. No. 225

The stance that Śiva took as he prepared to destroy the three cities of the *asuras* was by itself sufficient. There being hardly any necessity for him to aim the arrow. He is thus shown standing relaxedly merely holding the bow in the left hand and the arrow in the right. His great strength is manifested in the powerful modelling of the legs, the left foot pressing down on the back of a sturdy *gaṇa*. The upper right hand holding the axe is broken but the gesture is imbued with an alert movement. The individual soul, represented by the leaping antelope in the right hand, happily faces the spectator, giving solace to individuals taking refuge in the Lord.

Śiva is clad in a small loin cloth, one end of which falls as a triangular scarf in front, the other end tucked in at the back, the whole secured to the waist by a broad waist band and a rolled cloth. An *upavīta* adorns the chest, and the tie ends of the necklace are thrown over the shoulder to rest on the right chest. The tall *jaṭāmakuṭa* is secured by a *makara* clasp above which is a broad circular jewel. On the right is the crescent moon and a little snake while on the left is the long *ūmattai* flower. A small lotus, called *porpū* (golden flower) in epigraphs crowns the *jeṭā*.

During the annual festivals, called the *brahmotsava*, Tripurāntaka images are placed on a decorated temple car and pulled along around the four main streets encircling the village. This procession serves to reassure whorshippers of the God's protection.

The village Ponvilaintanpatti near Thanjavur, has yielded a Pallava inscription of Nandivarman of the eight century A.D. The image under discussion, however, has to be placed around A.D. 875 on stylistic grounds. (see Figs. 65–66 and 68–69).

67

65. Tripurāntaka, Ponvilaintanpatti, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 875

66. Mṛiga (detail) of 65

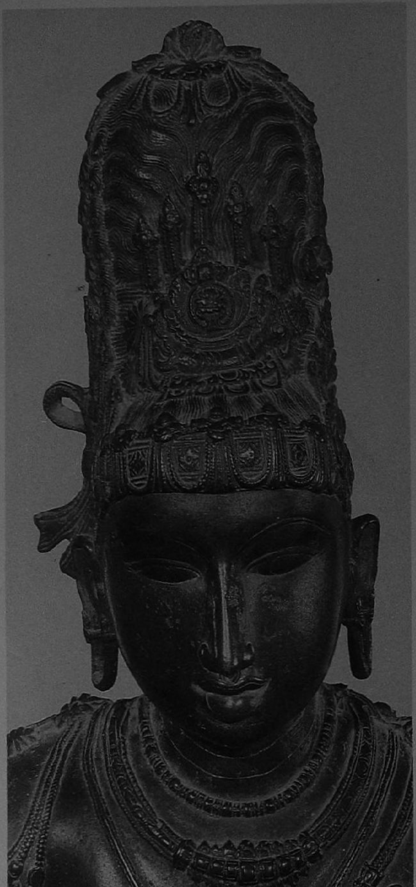
67. Mṛiga (detail of Tripurāntaka, Mayavaram, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 975

68. Apasmārapurusha (detail) of 65.

69. Back view of 65.

68

69



71

72

70. Tripurāntaka, National Museum, New Delhi., c. A.D. 970.

71. Head (detail) of 70. (Front View)

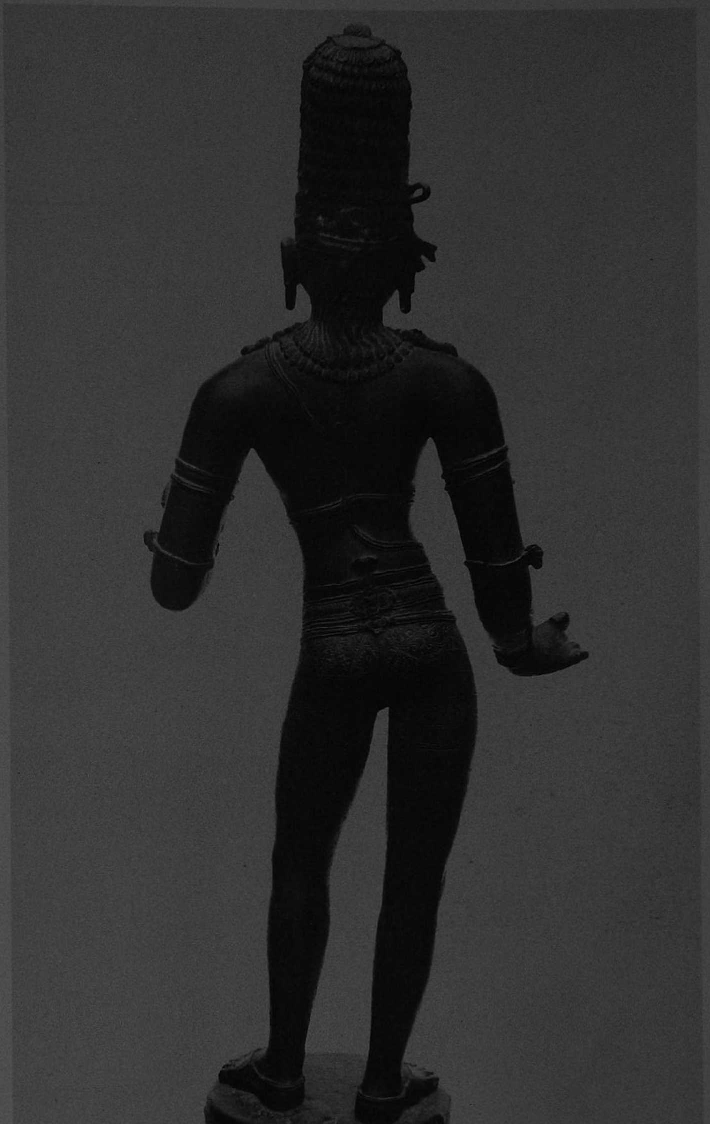
72. Head (detail) of 70 (Back View)

14
Tripurāntaka
Ht. 97.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 970
National Museum, New Delhi.

An exquisite figure of Tripurāntaka of the Early Chola age, representing the God, standing with two arms, the left in the pose of holding the bow and the right holding an arrow. The head-dress is treated elaborately in detail. The high matted crown is decorated with a jewelled band tied into the side with knots. The waist band has the leonine buckle; the elbow ornament is present, indicative of it early date. Finely modelled and well proportioned, it is a masterpiece. (see Figs 70 and 73)

An outstanding Tripurāntaka of the age of Rājarāja I, of excellent workmanship is preserved in the Naṭarāja temple, Chidambaram. (see Figs. 77 and 78)

73. Back view of 70



73

74

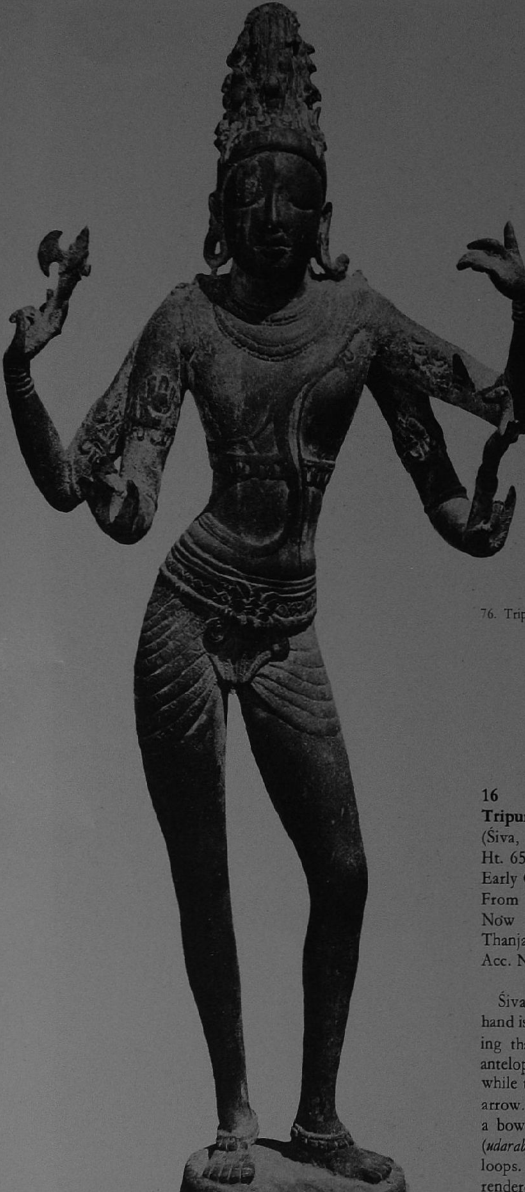
74. Tripurāntaka, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 950

75

75. Back view of 74

15
Tripurāntaka
(Śiva, destroyer of the three cities)
Ht. 81 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950
From Thanjavur town, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 26

Śiva stands in graceful *tribhaṅga* on a lotus placed on a square pedestal. The right leg is planted firmly, the left is slightly bent. A very small loin cloth is secured to the waist by a roll of cloth and a girdle. The upper left arm carries the antelope, the upper right the axe, a reversal of the usual order. The hooded cobra is slung over the elbow of the left arm. The *upavīta* is slender and short. The *jaṭāmakuṭa* has a *makura*-clasp in front, topped by a leaf-like jewel. On the right is the crescent moon, the *ūmattai* flower being placed on the left. A wheel like *śiraścakra* can be seen at the back, also, with a pendant suspended from the necklace. (see Figs. 74 and 75)



76

76. Tripurāntaka, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 925.

16
Tripurāntaka
(Śiva, destroyer of the three cities)
Ht. 65 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 925
From Vardhamāneśvara temple, Sekal, Thanjavur district. Now in the Maruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 11

Śiva standing in *dvibhaṅga*, is four-armed. The upper left hand is raised higher than the shoulder, the gesture suggesting that it holds a bow. The lower left-hand holds the antelope, the upper right hand the axe with a short handle; while the lower right hand is in the gesture of holding an arrow. The *upavīta* on the body undulates like the string of a bow. Three necklaces can be seen, the abdominal belt (*udarabandha*) is elaborated in that it has a chain with hanging loops. The leonine clasp at the girdle is prominently rendered. The loin cloth is short with a triangular projection in front. The right ear wears a *patrakuṇḍala*, and the distended ear hole of the left ear has a lion shaped ornament (*simhakuṇḍala*). The matted crown is held by a *makara* clasp in front and is adorned with a circular jewel at the top. The crescent moon is on the left. (see Fig 76; also cf. Figs. 77 and 78)

77

77. Tripurāntaka, Chidambaram, 10th century A.D.

78. Back view of 77

78

79. Vīṇādhara Śiva Pudupputtur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1025

17
Vinādhara Śiva
(Śiva as a player of the lute)
Ht. 122 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1025
From Punnaivananathaswami temple, Pudupputtur.
Now in the Thyāgaraja temple, Thiruvarur.
Acc. No. 69

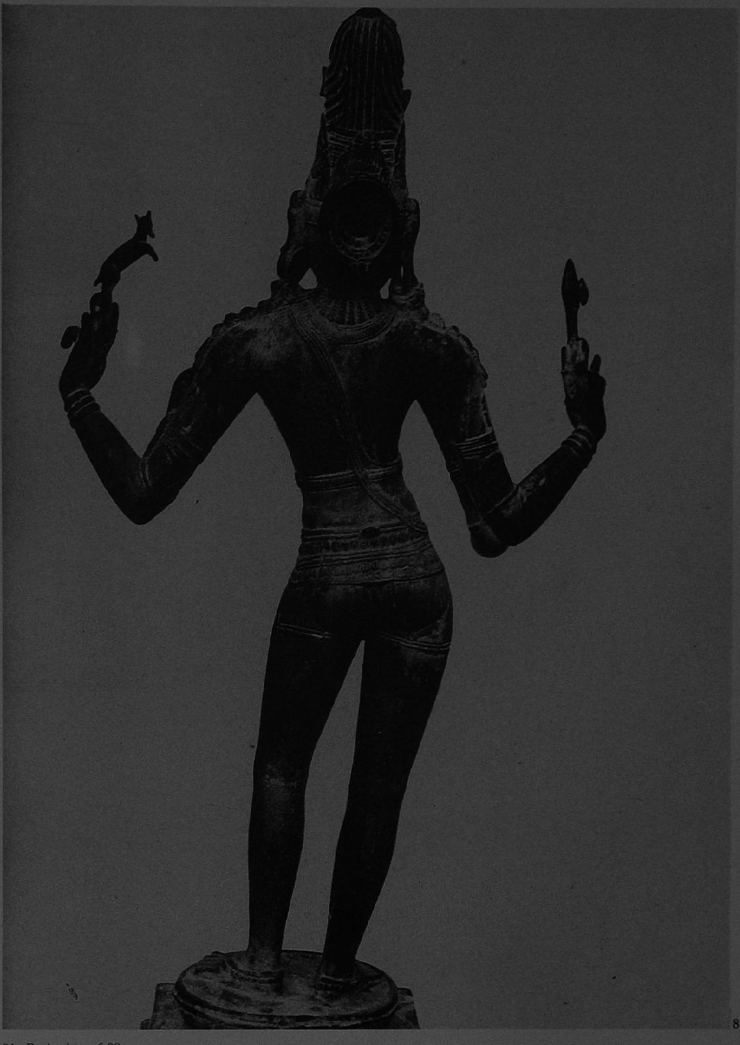
Śiva is the master of music and dance, and is adored as the very soul of music itself (*nāda-brahman*). Just as he appears as Dakshiṇāmūrti teaching the highest truths, so also, as a teacher of music he manifests himself as Vīṇādhara Dakshiṇāmūrti. His love for the *vīṇā* finds frequent reference in the Devāram hymns, as in the following verse by Appar:

"He, the Lord with blackened throat
the *Kapālin*, set foot to destroy death,
the wearer of the skin and the corpse
surrounded by the *munis* and *gaṇas*
whirls around with *vīṇā* in his hand.
He with the enticing smile captivates my heart
caring not to turn and see
deludes my soul and enters Valampuram."

The Vīṇādhara form of Śiva appears from the Pallava period, the finest such representation to be found inside the sanctum of the Vedagirīśvara temple on top of the hill at Thirukkalukkunram, near Mamallapuram. In Chola times, we get this form on temple walls and also on the southern side of the neck just below the domical top. The Metal images of Vīṇādhara survive from the tenth century A.D. The identification of these is often problematical because of the resemblance to Tripurāntaka figures. It is well to remember that though Śiva is generally accompanied by his consort Tripurasundarī in the latter aspect, but in the Vīṇādhara form he is depicted by himself. The front left arm of Śiva Tripurāntaka is also held relatively straight as though to hold a bow, while in the Vīṇādhara form it is held at an angle suggesting the correct mode for holding and playing on the *vīṇā*. When the position of the hand is unclear, temple usage could possibly provide a clue. (see Fig. 79)

80

80. Viṇādhara Śiva, Thiruneiper Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1100



81

81. Back view of 80.

18

Viṇādhara Śiva

(Śiva as a player of the lute)

Ht. 84 cms.

Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100

From Vānmikanāthā temple Thiruneipper village, Thanjavur district.

Standing in *tribhaṅga* pose, Śiva with four arms, carries the axe and antelope in the upper hands, the lower hands held in the gesture of playing the *vīṇā* which was in all probability made separately and lost in the course of time. The fire is deeply engrossed in the music, the deep involvement suggested by the slightly tilted head. (see Fig. 80 and 81).

82. Sukhāsana Śiva, Kilaiyur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 875. 82

19
Sukhāsana
Ht. 81.5 cms.
Late Pallava period, c. A.D. 875
From Kilaiyur, village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery.
Acc. No. 96.

The Somāskanda image is the representation of Śiva with his consort Umā Parameśvarī and their child Skanda, the holy family seated on the crest of Mt. Kailasa for the happiness of the world. For according to the Śaiva Siddhānta, Śiva bestows his grace on an individual soul only in the company of Umā Parameśvarī symbolised by the child Skanda. While in the sanctum of the temple the ever-auspicious Lord, Sadāśiva, appears in the manifest-unmanifest form of the Liṅga, his fully manifest form is to be seen in the image of Somāskanda deva. In all festive rites, when the God is taken out in procession, the metal Somāskandamūrti is the principal object of worship. Every Śiva temple in Tamilnadu has this image whether or not it has other manifestations. As a matter of fact when other forms are not available, the Somāskanda, with the help of appropriate decorations, takes on other aspects of Śiva such as Tripurāntaka or Bhikshāṭaṇa as demanded by the occassion. Since Somāskanda is the principal manifest form of the Liṅga enshrined in the sanctum, it is named after the temple. Thus the Somāskanda image at the Thiruvarur temple is called Thyāgarāja. The Great temple at Thanjavur, built by Rājarāja I, (c. A.D. 1000) was called the Dakṣiṇa (southern) Meru so that it is entirely appropriate for its Somāskanda image to be called the Dakshiṇa meru viṭankar.

83. Back view of 82.

Representation of Somāskanda occur in temples of the Pallava period, (c. A.D. 700), where they are carved on the wall behind the Liṅga in the main sanctum often adorned by Brahmā and Vishṇu. Such representations are also found in some of the Chola temples. The most outstanding example of the Pallava age is from Thiruvalangadu in Thanjavur district, now preserved in the Madras Museum.

Since the Somāskanda group consist of three separate figures usually made separately and fitted to a common pedestal, it is not uncommon for individual figures to get detached and lost or these to be substituted with new images when one or another member of the group is lost or damaged. The image exhibited thus obviously forms part of a Somāskanda group, the other two accompanying figures being lost. Sometime in the Chola period another figure of Umā Parameśvarī was made and placed along with this figure, and though it is preserved in the Thanjavur Art Gallery, only the Śiva image is shown here. Seated on a lotus pedestal, the right leg pendent, the left resting on the seat, the God of the Kailāsa mountain with broad shoulders and of towering mien bestows grace and protection to his worshippers with the lower right hand held in *abhaya mudrā*. The left hand is in *āhūya varada* position. The upper arms carry the axe and a lively leaping antelope. The *upavīta* branches off into three strands and a belt clasps the body above the navel. Three necklaces are present, one of them provided with pendents, the longer one falling between the breast, all exactly identical to similar jewellery in the Śiva of the Vaḍakkalattur Kalyāṇasundara group. A *makara* ornament is suspended from the right ear lobe, the left ear supporting a *patra kuṇḍala*. The tall *jaṭāmakuṭa* has three distinct tiers marked by the twisted ends of matted locks, a feature only to be observed in early images. It has a band at the base, just at the hair line above which is a garland of *konrai* flowers tied around the hair. Next is the *makara* clasp surmounted by a skull. The *jaṭā* is capped by a lotus flower, the crescent moon and *ūmattai* flower to be seen on the left.

The village Kilaiyur, in Nagappattinam taluk, Thanjavur district, has yielded, like Thiruvenkadu, several bronze masterpieces, of the early age, like Subrahmaṇya, Kālī, and Tripurāntaka. It would seem that an accomplished family of metal sculptors flourished there from the eight or ninth century onwards. One may note that Vaḍakkalattur, from where comes the great image of Kalyāṇasundara is hardly twenty miles from the village. (See Figs. 82 and 83)

84

84. Sukhāsana Śiva, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 875.

85

85. Back view of 84.

20
Sukhāsana Śiva

Ht. 55 cms.
Late Pallava period, c. A.D. 875
From Thiruneipper village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thyāgarāja temple, Thiruvarur village, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 182

The Śiva image, formed part of Somāskanda group, the other two figures of Umā Parameśvarī and Skanda being missing. Though damaged at the arms and also the leg, the figure has commanding presence. He is seated erect, with the right leg pendent, the left resting on the pedestal. Śiva wears a thick waist cloth which is partially covered by the left leg. Only the axe on the right arm is preserved, the rest of the arms being damaged. The high crown bears the *makara* clasp in front, the *ūmattai* flower on the left and the crescent moon on the right.

Behind is a large *śiraścakra*, strands of hair falling over the back. The necklaces and the *pīppal* leaf pendent are prominently rendered. (see Fig. 84 and 85)

86

86. Somāskanda, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950.

21

Somāskanda

(Śiva with Pārvatī and the child Skanda).
Ht. Śiva 62 cms., Pārvatī 48cms., Skanda 13 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950
From Vardhamāneśvarar temple; Sekal, Thanjavur District.
Now in Thiruthuraippundi.
Acc. No. 19

Images of the holy family, Śiva, Pārvatī and their son Skanda are in every Śiva temple, it being an essential part of the daily ritual to offer them worship. In portraying the group, the Chola artist was often successful on expressing the deep and abiding strength of the family life of the period. In the present group, Śiva is a picture of majesty, with broad shoulders and powerful chest, the calm face with high matted crown, conveying his mastery of the world and its inhabitants. Pārvatī has her face slightly turned towards her Lord, and also towards the devotee, for it is through her, that the great Lord bestows grace. In between is the child Skanda, seated with crossed legs and holding flowers in both arms. He wears *channavīra*, and a little garland of flowers around the head.

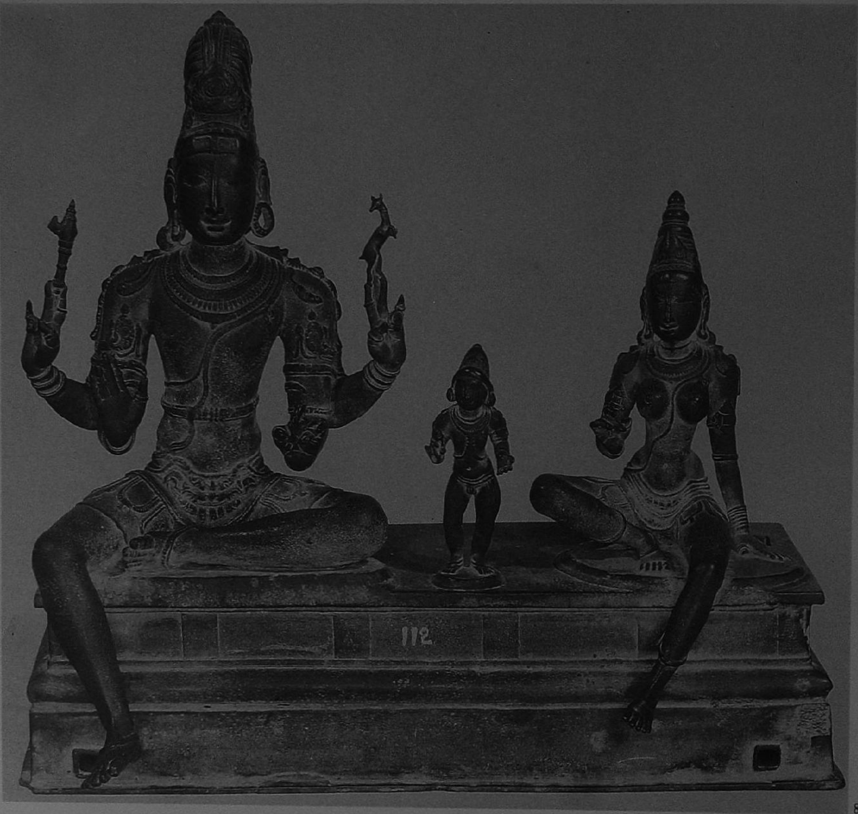
87

87. Skanda (close-up) of 86

88. Śiva detail of 86.

88

Somāskanda images in metal, have survived from the Pallava times, the earliest being the Somāskanda from Tiruvalangadu village, now in the Madras Museum. Chola bronzes of the same theme have come down to us in fairly large numbers, the present one being a fine example of the middle of the tenth century. (See Figs. 86 to 88)



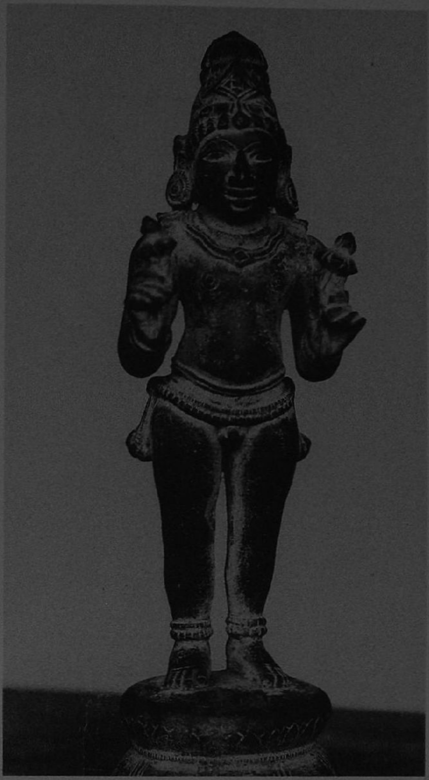
89

89. Somāskanda, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 975.

22
Somāskanda
(Śiva and Pārvatī with Skanda)
Ht. 51 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 975
From Pattisvaram, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur.

Śiva, in the company of Pārvatī and the child Skanda, symbolises universal parentage. The couple are extolled as the father and mother of the world *jagataḥ pitarau* by Kalidasa who has left an immortal epic on the birth of Kumāra, *Kumārasambhava*. The birth of Skanda, was for the benefit of humanity. The Śaiva Siddhānta system, as developed in the Tamil land, lays great emphasis on the concept of *Ammai* and *Appan*, (i.e. Mother and Father) for Śiva and Pārvatī. Ever since the 7th century A.D., the form of Somāskanda has become the favourite theme in the Tamil country, though this type of image rarely occurs in other parts of India.

The sculpture exhibited here is of fine workmanship. Śiva is majestically seated while Pārvatī turns elegantly towards her Lord. She rests her left arm on the pedestal, and the child Skanda, standing in between, make this a serene group. Of particular interest is the form of Skanda, who is almost standing in a gentle dance pose, his head gracefully turned to the rhythm of his dance. The sculpture though small is of great individuality. (see Fig. 89)



90

90. Skanda, Thiruvidaimarudur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000

91. Back view of 90.

23
Skanda
Ht. 26.5 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
Treasure trove find from Thiruvidaimarudur.
Now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur
Acc. No. 43

The God, once part of a Somāskanda group, stands on a lotus pedestal, holding a lotus in each hand. He is not clothed, but wears a *kiṅkiṇi sara*, fastened by tassels on the sides.

Skanda is also called Kumāra, Senānī and Guru. In the Tamil country he is further adored as Muruga, Shaṇmuga and Subrahmaṇya. Muruga means, beautiful, sweet and youthful and Skanda combines in himself all these aspects. The *Ajitāgama* defines Skanda as one who wards off sins (*Skandayati sarva pāpebhyaḥ iti skandatvam asya*). He assumes the name Senanī, by protecting the army of the celestials. Praising his greatness, the Tamil classic *Paripādal* calls him the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, brought up by six *krittikā* women (*pleiades*). Envious of the strength of the new born Skanda, Indra aimed his *vajra* at the child, splitting him into six parts, these once again uniting into one body with six heads (*shaṇmukha*). Even as a child and with no weapon, Skanda defeated Indra. So the celestials made him their commander. He is generally shown wearing a *channavīra* in order to indicate his heroic nature, even as a child in the Somāskanda group; but this is not the case here nor is he shown here with the *upavīta*. The God carries a lotus in each of his hands, a feature he shows with Sūrya, the Sun God. In this connection one may recall that the Tamil work *Thirumurugārruppaḍai*, Muruga is likened to the rising Sun.

It is significant that the young child, like Sūrya, carries lotus in his hands. (see Figs 9o and 91)

92

93

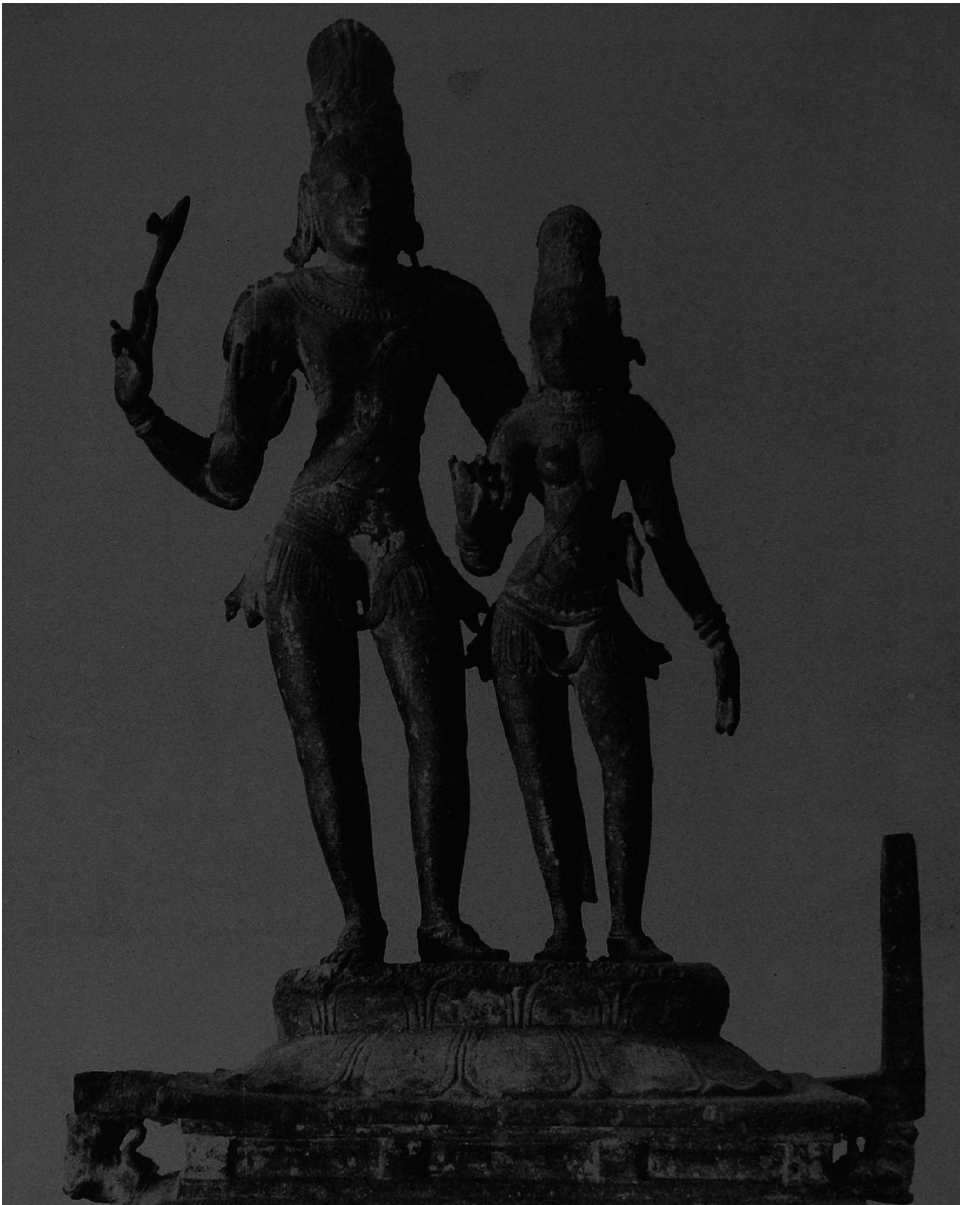
92. Candraśekhara Śiva, Korukkai, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000.

93. Back view of 92.

94. Āliṅgana Candraśekhara Śiva, Korukkai, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000.

24
Candraśekhara Śiva
Ht. 26 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
From the Virattesvarar temple, Korukkai.
Now in the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 15

The Lord, who consumed the all destroying poison that arose from the churning of the ocean of milk, also took as a head ornament the moon yielded by the ocean in the course of that cosmic event and so came to be designated the Lord wearing the moon on head (Candraśekhara). In this benign aspect he can be represented alone (*kevala*), in the company of Umā (Umāsahita) or as embracing the Devī (*āliṅgana*). In the present figure, Śiva stands in an erect position with four arms, the upper hands carrying antelope and axe, the lower right being held in the *abhayamudrā* while the left hand rests on the waist. The moon is prominently shown on the right side of the crown. The extended right earlobe is broken and the left wears a *patrakuṇḍala*. The waist cloth forms the characteristic loop between the legs. It is difficult to say whether Śiva is in the *kevala* form, or was once accompanied by his consort. (see Figs. 92 and 93)



95

95. Back view of 94.

25

Āliṅgana Candraśekhara

(Śiva embracing Gaurī)
Ht. Śiva 38.5 cms.; Pārvatī 33 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100
In the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur District.
Acc. No. 35

Śiva is deeply attached to his consort Umā, activating the universe only through her and all his merciful acts being performed in her company. When, as Satī, she died in the sacrificial fire, Śiva was afflicted with deep grief carrying her body on his shoulder as he wandered over the world. This mortal behaviour on the part of the great God was but an instrument to his devotees. It is the same intense compassion for the living that makes the great *yogin* to appear in the company of his consort, embracing Pārvatī, as in this image, who fully conscious of her role of the Cosmic play of Śiva, stands ready to cooperate with him in every act. Śiva's head turns gently towards his consort as he softly caresses her waist, the Lord of the Universe, presenting a picture of serene beauty as he affords protection with the lower right hand. The upper right hand holds the axe, the antelope of the upper left being broken. The Devī is equally relaxed, her body bending slightly, the left arm lifted a little to accommodate Śiva's affictionate arm. The restrained contours, the gentle expressiveness of the faces and the subdued rendering of jewellery and ornaments illustrate the control the Chola artists had over form and expression.

This aspect of Śiva, also called Pradosha Nāyaka (Lord of the evening twilight) is taken out in procession during the daily festival (*nityotsava*). Worshippers view this image with especial devotion. (See Figs. 94 and 95)

96

96. Āliṅgana Chandraśekhara, Nadapur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1100.

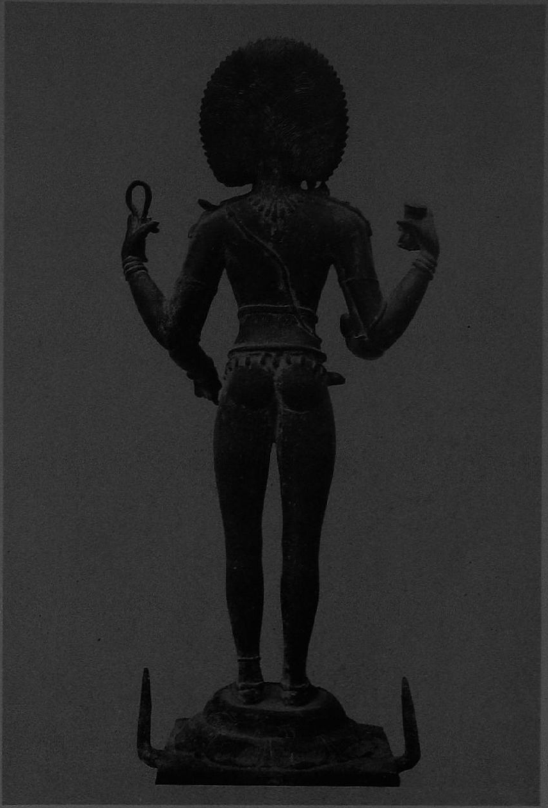
26
Āliṅgana Candraśekhara
(Śiva embracing Gaurī)
Ht. Śiva 48 cms; Pārvatī 42.5 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100
From the Nadapuresvarar temple, Nadapur village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Tiruvarur temple, Tiruvarur

Śiva appears in this figure as an affectionate husband, gently fondly clasping his consort Pārvatī. Accompanied by her he affords protection, the right arm in *abhaya* gesture. The axe and the antelope are seen in the upper hands. Pārvatī an equally loving figure, stands close to Śiva, her right hand in the gesture of holding a flower. (See Fig. 96)

97. Bhairava, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 925.

97

98. Back view of 97.



98

27
Bhairava
Ht. 79 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 925
From the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 11

Bhairava is a terrifying aspect of Śiva, the one under which he severed the head of Brahmā in order to remove the veil of ignorance and bestow knowledge. Known as Vairavakkaḍvul, he has been adored and worshipped in the Tamil country from very early times. In the Tamil Sangam classics assigned to the beginning of the Christian era, the God is refered to as *Kāri Uṇḍik Kaḍavul*, while the literature of the Chola and subsequent periods refers to the Bairava form of Śiva. The God is usually placed at entrances, particularly those of gopuras and forts in which aspect he is the protector of the *dvāra*.

Metal images of Bhairava appear from early Chola period, to which time this superb image may be assigned. The nude God stands erect on a full-blown-lotus placed on a square pedestal. On the feet are anklets with bells, the resonant sounds of which often come in for special praise in religious texts. A ring called *Kaḻal* clasps the left leg. A snake with a half opened-hood serves as a girdle. The *upavīta* appears to be strung with skulls. The lord carries the little drum (*ḍamaruka*) in the upper arm its sound announcing the arrival. The upper left hand holds a noose, the lower left the skull-cup (*kapāla*). The lower right hand is supposed to hold a trident which is however not to be found here. The circular disc-like *jaṭāmaṇḍala*, focuses attention on the face replete with charm and grace. (see Figs. 97 and 98)

99

100

99. Bhairava, Korukkai, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000.

100. Back view of 99.

28
Bhairava
Ht. 74.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
From Korukkai village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.

Śiva as Bhairava standing, nude is four armed holding the drum in the rear right arm, a snake as a noose in the rear left, a skull cup in the front left and a trident (now missing) in the front right arm. A chain of *kiṅkiṇis*, and a coiling cobra act as waist bands. An *upavīta* of skulls is seen on the body. The hairs are arranged in two rows as *maṇḍala* behind the head. It is a fine and elegant piece of the Rājarāja age. (see Figs. 99 and 100)

101. Śrīkaṭṭamūrti, Punjaiyur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 100.

102

102. Back view of 101

29

Śrīkaṇṭamūrti (Vishāpaharaṇa)

(Śiva as partaker of the deadly poison)

Ht. 55.5 cms.

Pallava, c. A.D. 800

From the Hālāhala Pañcanadīśvarar temple, Punjaiyur. Now in Thiruthuraippundi village, Thanjavur district.

Śiva, the Mahāyogin, benefactor of the world, consumed the devastating Hālāhala poison, in order that the world and the gods be saved from extinction. He became Nīlakaṇṭa, destroyer of time and death, seated on a pedestal, holding the deadly poison in the right hand ready to consume it, and firmly gripping the great snake with his left, Śiva appears here with four arms in the form known as Śrīkaṇṭamūrti, and also Vishāpaharaṇa. An inscription in the great temple of Thanjavur, refers to the consecration of a copper image of Śrīkaṇṭamūrti, four armed and seated, by a queen of Rājarāja around A.D. 1012. The Śaiva Siddhantins of the Tamil country adore him particularly as Śrīkaṇṭa Parameśvara.

The present image, showing early characteristics, carries the axe in the rear right and the antelope in the left hand. The front right holds the poison and the left in the gesture of holding a snake. The *upavīta* of pearls panes over the right arm. The *toraṇa* (the aureole) is elaborate, being provided with festoons. The *śiraścakra* at the back is quite large. The treatment of the figure suggests a mingling of the Chalukya-Rashtrakuta tradition, with the Tamil tradition. (see R. Nagaswamy, *Lalit Kalā, 18*). (see Figs 101 and 102)

103

104

103. Kālī, Thiruvenkadu, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950.

104. Kālī, Kilaiyur, Thanjavur district, 10th century A.D.

30
Kālī
Ht. 45 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950
From Thiruvenkadu village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Madras Museum.
Acc. No. 668/70

Seated on a pedestal in the royal pose, this magnificent figure of Kālī, represents both quietitude and anger, blessing with her right hand, holding the cup in her left, the trident with the upper right hand and elephant goad with the upper left, the Goddess is at once the destroyer of evil and bestower of grace. Her flaming hair stands erect at the back of the head, the eyebrows are raised and the rounded eyes contribute to the general fierceness of impression, further enhanced by a swelling at the root of the nose and closed lips with protruding teeth. The Devī wears a jewelled necklace but her *upavīta* is made of skulls and the breast band is formed by a snake. The girdle at the waist has a lion-like clasp.

An image of imposing beauty and elegance, it comes from Thiruvenkadu village which has yielded other bronzes of superlative quality, notably Vṛishavāhana, Kannappan, Ardhanārī, Bhikshāṭana and Kalyāṇasundara, testifying to the pre-eminence of this area in the art of bronze casting in tenth and eleventh century A.D. (see Fig. 103 cf. Fig. 104)

105

105. Kālī, Vadavira temple, Kodavasal, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1050.

31
Kālī
Ht. 65.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 1050
From the Vadavir temple, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Koneswara temple, Kodavasal, Thanjavur district.

Kālī, the great Goddess of the villages is not only worshipped by the common people but also sages of the highest learning. As the destroyer of the buffalo-headed demon she is adored as Durgā; as the killer of the terrible demons Śumbha and Niśumbha demons, she is known as Kālī or Caṇḍī, her purpose being to restore order out of the choas created by the *asuras*. This she does by sounding the bell, the priomordial bell, that strikes terror into the heart of the wicked; with the noose she seizes the sinner, or rather the sin so as to free the devotee; the trident is her weapon as it is that of Śiva, ready to pierce the demons and relieve the world of its sufferings. The skull-cup sucks the evil energy—the blood that drives man to error. All her acts and attributes are out of compassion for the devotee. The universal mother, the symbol of mercy and affection, assumes a terrifying countenance, by wearing an *upavīta* of skull, rolling her eyes in anger, baring her teeth and making her hair rise in flames. She is nevertheless the most benign of the divinities, the villagers faithfully turning to her as the presiding deity of the village, in times of drought, epidemics, disease and disaster. Every village in the Tamil land has a temple dedicated to her. Annual festivals in her honour are held with intense devotion. Instead of the codified rituals of the high tradition, the ceremonies, in her temples are those dressed by the devotee who make offerings to her in whatever form they wish—a direct communication with the divine without any intermediaries.

Several metal images especially of the Chola age have survived indicating the popularity of the festival of Kālī. In epigraphical records she is called Kālā Bhaṭāri. (see Fig. 105)

106. Kālī, National Museum, New Delhi, 11th century A.D.

32
Kālī
(The seated devī with eight arms)
Ht. 41 cms.
Early Chola period, 11th century A.D.
National Museum, New Delhi

Eight armed Kālī in seated posture holding various emblems in her arms, some of which are broken and missing. With the raised upper arm she holds a *śūla* (trident) piercing the demon (*asura*) who would have been portrayed on the seat, now missing. Other right arm wields a sword, the *ḍamaru* (drum) and probably a dagger or belt. The upper left arm is in *vismaya* pose. The other visible arms carry shield and *kapāla*, the fourth probably holds a *pāśa*. It is an impressive image though smaller in dimension. (see Fig. 106)

33

Kālī

(The standing figure of Kālī)
Ht. 75.5 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1250
National Museum, New Delhi

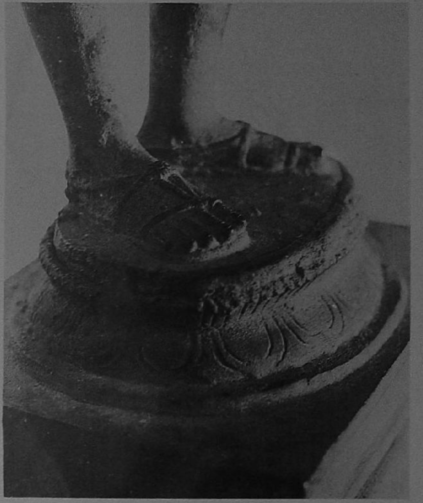
This slender and tall figure of Kālī, has no longer the grandeur of the Early Chola idiom but resembles the sculpture in stone in the Tribhuvanam temple near Kumbakonam (13th century A.D.), with an emphasis on slender waist, prominent breasts and the three folds on *udara* (the *trivalī*) somewhat flat. There is a marked change in taste particularly in the treatment of garments and ornaments, to which less attention is paid. Yet the face exhibits the lingering charm of the Chola school which is already on the wane. (See Fig. 107)

107

107. Kālī, National Museum, New Delhi c. A.D. 1250

108. Upper half (detail) of Kannappan. (Front view)

109



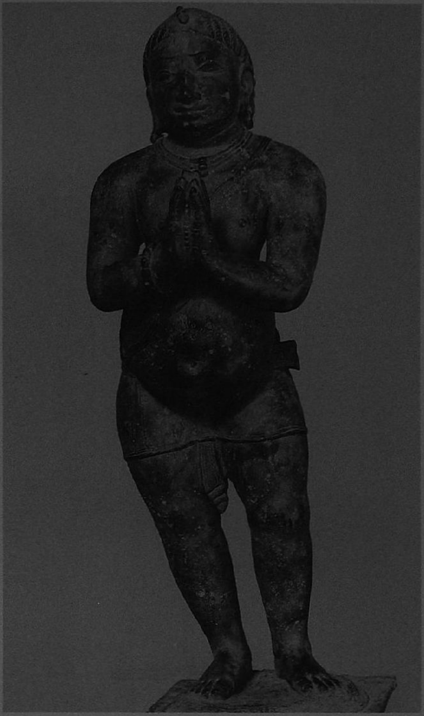
110

34
Kannappan
Ht. 66 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 975
Found as Treasure trove, in Thiruvenkadu village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery.
Acc. No. 174.

Kannappan symbolises the innocent, simple, intense devotion of a simple forest dweller, greatly admired in Tamil literature and history. The great saint Appar sings "No love unto thee Lord, can surpass that of Kannappan". And for all that Kannappan was but a hunter-boy, who had not heard even the name Śiva. Made the crown prince of his tribe he once saw a Liṅga on the top of the Kālahasti hill and being told that it was Śiva, he was naturally drawn to it and refused to leave the place. He offered it the flesh of hunted deer, removed the flowers from the Liṅga with his slippers in order to clean it and brought water in his mouth to pour over the Lord. This was the simple straight forward worship. One day Kannappan noticed that one of the eyes of the Liṅga was bleeding, when it occurred to him that he could stop the bleeding by offering an eye. The very idea made him dance with joy, and joyously plucking his eye he placed it on the Liṅga. To his happiness the bleeding stopped; but the other eye now began to bleed, and the thought that he could offer yet another of his eyes to the Lord sent Kannappan into greater ecstacy. He placed his leg on the bleeding eye to guide him when he became blind, and was about to remove his other eye with an arrow when he was stopped from doing so by Śiva himself appearing in person. Kannappan was blessed by the Lord, and ever since the innocent love of the tribal boy has been immortalised in poetry, religion, and art. The image exhibited here is unsurpassed in its ability to capture the spirit of Kannappan's innocent love. The devotee is shown standing, wearing leather slippers on the feet. The lower garment also seems to be made of leather, fringed with *cowrie* shells. At the waist there are two chains and a girdle also made of *cowries*, which are also to be seen in the armlets and the forebands. A *channavīra* with a circular leather clasp is worn on the body. The left arm is held in the pose of wielding a bow, while the plucked eye rests on the palm of the right hand. Kannappan has a beard and a broad moustache. The head dress is like a *Jaṭāmakuṭa*, but decorated with feathers indicating his status as a forest dweller. Broad, circular ear rings adorn the ears. With lips slightly parted, one eye intact the other a blank, the plucked eye ball softly and delicately laid on the palm, Kannappan's look of intense, uncaring devotion is extremely moving. I know of no sculpture that surpasses it in tenderness and intensity. (See Figs. 108 to 110)

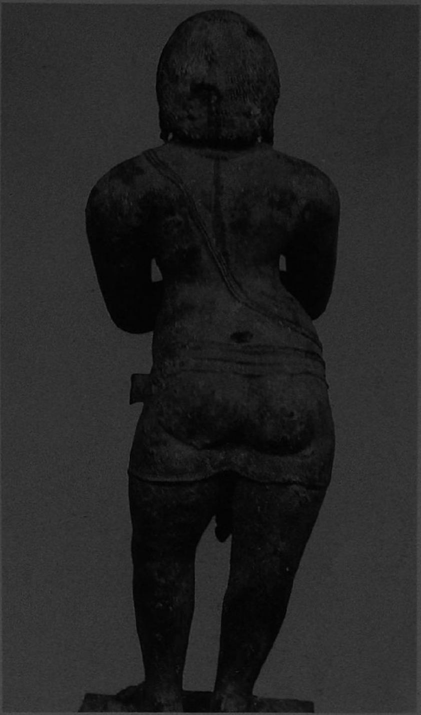
109. Upper half (detail) of Kannappan, (Back view)

110. *Pādukā* (detail) of Kannappan



111

111. Brahmādhirāyar, Thiruvenkadu Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 1000.



112

112. Back view of 111.

35

Brahmādhirāyar

(Portrait of a Brāhmaṇa general)

Ht. 68.5 cms.

Chola period, c. A.D. 1000

Found as Treasure trove at Thiruvenkadu.

Now in Thanjavur Art Gallery.

Identified as Brahmādhirāyar, the figure is probably a portrait of Brāhmaṇa chief who served the Chola monarch as an army commander. Sparsely dressed and with little jewellery on his body, the man stands in an adoring attitude, the hands clasped in front carrying a chaplet of flowers. He is short and plump with a pronounced belly. The short lower garment covers half the thighs. The weight of the body is thrown on the right leg, the left leg bent gently. The ornaments consist of an *upavīta,* three necklaces each with a coral bead and a *rudrāksha* wristlet and small earrings. The hair is arranged in short curls along the forehead and has a tiny knot in the front. The tense eyebrow, large eye, tight lips, and the broad face, bespeak a certain toughness and determination of character.

It is known that many Brāhmaṇas served as commanders of the imperial army, especially under Rājarāja I, Rājendra I and his successors, distinguishing themselves in every war. They were often given the title Brahmādhirāya, king among Brāhmaṇas. Kṛishṇan Rāman alias Mummuḍi Chola Brahmamārāya, was a *senāpati* (general) under Rājarāja I and Chola epigraphs give several names endowed with the Brahmādhirāyar title. These men served as counsellors to the king and also helped him in the building of temples and religious pursuits. Mummuḍi Choḷa Brahmādhirāya thus built the enclosure wall around the great temple of Thanjavur and also consecrated metal images.

The image exhibited belongs to the period of Rājarāja I, and is an excellent example of Chola portraiture, of which several other examples are known, most of these being set up in the temples as devotees. That it also comes from Thiruvenkadu village, further attesting to its great importance as a centre of bronze casting. (see Figs. 111 to 113)

113

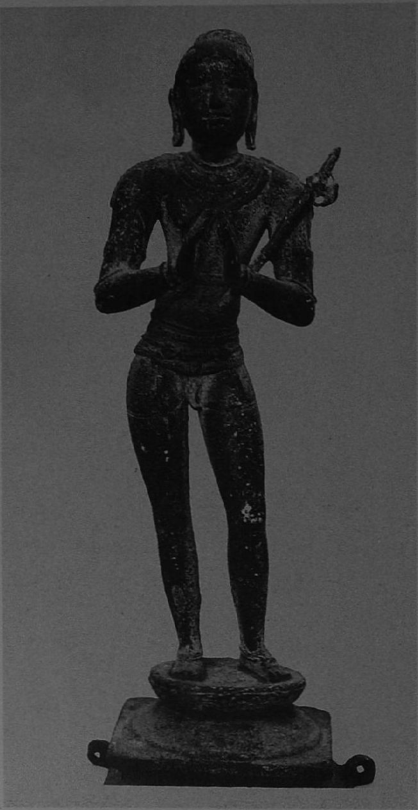
113. Brahmādhirāyar, upper half (close-up) of 111

114

114. Caṇḍikeśvara, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1100

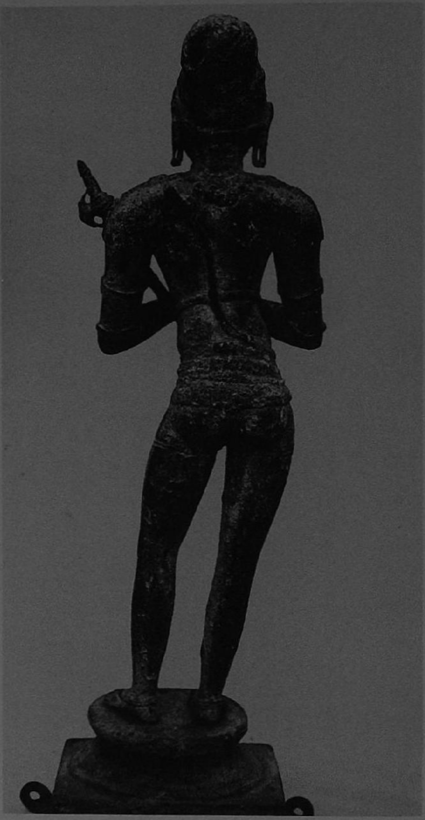
36
Caṇḍikeśvara
Ht. 55 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
In the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 41

The palms touch each other in front of the chest in the act of paying obeissance. The axe he usually wields is missing. The pedestal is also broken. (see Fig. 114)



115

115. Caṇḍikeśvara, Nadappur,
Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950



116

116. Back view of 115

37
Caṇḍikeśvara
Ht. 50 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950
From the Śiva temple, Nadapur district.
Now in the Thyāgarāja temple, Thiruvarur.
Acc. No. 59

Images of Caṇḍikeśvara were extremely popular in the Chola period, the rulers perhaps identifying themselves with the devotee. Their great veneration for the God is well-known and they refer to themselves in inscriptions as bees, tasting the nectar of the lotus feet of Lord Śiva.

This image has a somewhat boyish aspect enhanced by the hair bun instead of the usual crown. The fingers of the palm barely touch each other in the just touch at the top folded *añjali mudrā*. (see Fig 115 and 116)

38
Caṇḍikeśvara
Ht. 67 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950
In the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 42

With legs apart, the body bent forward gently, in an attitude of submissiveness, the palms delicately closed in salutation and the withdrawn eyes absorbed in the contemplation of Śiva's inner presence, Caṇḍeśa appears here as the very personification of a gentle and lovable devotee. He is bedecked with jewels, all worked with great care and attention. The axe rests on the upper left arm. The subtle modelling of the face and the high crown enhance the tenderness of the image which like the other figure illustrated here, is an exceptionally fine specimen of the early Chola age (see Fig. 117)

117

117. Caṇḍikeśvara, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950

118

118. Caṇḍikeśvara, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950

39

Caṇḍikeśvara

Ht. 87.5 cms.

Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950

From the Kāyārohaṇa-Nīlāyatākshī temple, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur district.

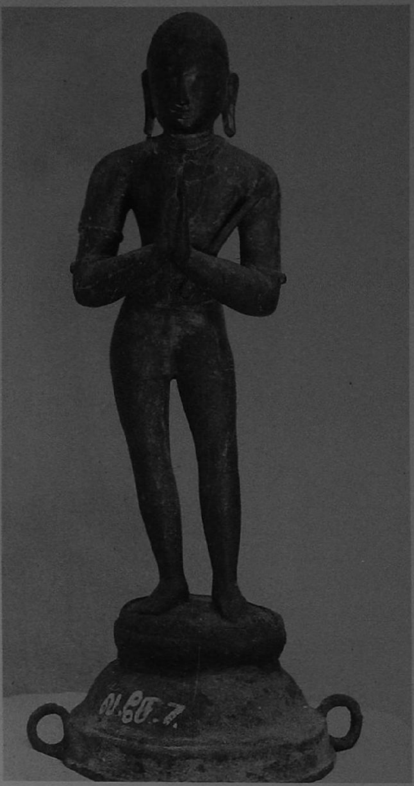
Caṇḍikeśvara, first among the devotees of Śiva, was born at Ceynalur, near Kumbakonam (Thanjavur district) in a Brahmin family. His parents named him Vicāraśarman, and duly initiated him into Vedic studies. Seeing the mistreatment of a cow, the boy secured permission from the elders to look after the village cows which he did so well that they began to yield greatly increased quantities of milk at the mere touch of the udder. Urged by an inner desire to worship Lord Śiva, he used the milk to annoint a *liṅga* of sand that he had himself made. This activity was brought to the notice of the village which called the boy's father to account. Deciding to see matter for himself, the father followed Vicāraśarman, and witnessing the annointment with milk, began to beat him with a stick. The boy continued his devotion unmoved but when the father kicked the milk pot, he was disturbed enough to fling a stick at his father, the stick turning into an axe which cut off his legs. Unmindful of this the boy continued his devotion, whereupon Lord Śiva appeared in person to bless both him and his father, raising the boy to *Caṇḍeśapada*, the supreme state a devotee could reach. It was decreed that henceforth the food, the cloth, the flowers and all that were offered to Śiva, were to be offered to Caṇḍeśa (the new name of the boy) as well. Caṇḍeśa became the principal guardian of Śiva's properties and during the Chola period all the transaction of a Śiva temple were done in his name. In every Śaiva temple, a separate subsidiary shrine is dedicated to Caṇḍeśa near the sanctum, on the northern side.

Images of Caṇḍeśa began to appear from the Pallava period (8th century) where the Lord is shown crowning Caṇḍeśa with a garland of flowers. In subsidiary shrines he is mostly conceived as a two-armed, seated figure holding an axe by the handle. Metal images of Caṇḍeśa date from early Chola times (10th century A.D.) and these show him both standing or seated. Seated he resembles the stone images of the shrines, with two arms and holding the axe. As a standing figure, he holds a small garland pressed between the palms of his hands that are folded in adoration at the chest. The axe was shown resting on the shoulder but being often cast separately, is now missing.

In temple festivals, particularly the great ones, five images called *pañcamūrtis* namely those of Gaṇeśa, Subrahmaṇya, Śiva, Devī and Caṇḍikeśvara, are carried out in procession, the image of Caṇḍikeśvara being placed at the end in order to emphasize his position as the general supervisor. In this aspect he is always shown standing. His presence in these processions being considered indispensable, it is not surprising that large numbers of the devotee's images have survived to the present time. It is to be noted that in none of these is he shown as a boy, his personality transformed the moment he was blessed by Śiva. He invariably appears as a resplendent youth adorned with a *jaṭāmakuṭa*, appropriate jewellery and a short lower garment secured by a jewelled girdle. (see Figs. 118 and 119)

119

119. Back view of 118



120

121

120. Appar, Vadakadu Sekal, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000
121. Back view of 121
122. Jñānasambandar, Madras Government Museum, c. A.D. 1000

40
Appar
Ht. 38 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
From Vardhamāneśvarar temple; Sekal.
Now in the Marunthiśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi.
Acc. No. 7

Singing the glories of Lord Śiva, spade in hand, Appar, also known as Thirunāvukkarasu (king among poets) moved from temple to temple clearing the thorns and weeds even at the ripe age of eighty. Born as a Vellāla (agriculturist) in a Śaiva family, he took a fancy for Jainism and became a monk in a monastery at Cuddalore. The love and affection of his sister Tilakavathi, however, resulted in his return to Śaivism and ever since he became symbol of devotion and piety. Visiting all the then existing Śiva temples in Tamilnadu, Appar sang the glories of Śiva in delightful verses, these hymns constituting the fourth, fifth, and sixth books of the sacred writings of Śaivas. He, along with Jñānasambandar spearheaded the Bhakti (devotion) movement which changed the nature of religious life not only in Tamilnadu but the entire country giving added impetus for the construction of the temples. The temples visited and sung of by these two saints came to be called the sacred centres (*Pāḍal perra tala*) and the Chola emperors rebuilt many of these in stone. Greatly influenced by their life and works they also consecrated several metal images of these saints in the temples. At Thanjavur, for example, inscriptions refer to the administrator of the temple under Rājarāja Chola I, setting up metal images of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar.

Appar is portrayed in the present image in a gently flexed posture resting the spade against his shoulder and wearing a *rudrāksha* garland and armlet. The faded hands carrying flowers accentuate the word of intense devotion. (See Figs. 120 and 121)

123

122

41

Jñānasambandar
Ht. 55.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
From Mukundanur village, Thanjavur district
Now in the Madras Government Museum, Madras.

Jñānasambandar heads the list of Devāram singers, his poems on several hundred Śiva temples forming the first three books of the sacred Śaiva hymns. It is related that the child once started weeping when his father left him on the bank as he entered the water for a bath, Śiva and Pārvatī appeared before the child, Pārvatī feeding him with her own milk at which he began to dance in ecstacy. On being asked from where he received the cup the child pointed to the sky, where Umā-Maheśvara appeared to bless both the father and the child. As a result of this episode the boy came to be called the child who drank the milk of knowledge (*jñānappāluṇḍa pillai*). Subsequently the father carried the child on his soulders from one temple to the other, where with a pair of cymbals, in hand, Sambandar sang delightful music. At the age of sixteen, he merged with the effulgent light of Śiva. Most Śiva temples possess metal images of four famous Śaiva saints—Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Māṇickkavācakar and among these, it is Sambandar who is invariably shown as a child, either standing or dancing. When standing he carries a cup in the left hand and the right points up to heaven, the image recalling his answer to his father's question regarding the presence of the cup. Another standing image depicts him with cymbals in both arms, singing the Devāram hymns. A third common type is Sambandar dancing, one leg lifted, the left arm extended, and the right arm pointing up, the image referring to his joyous dance after drinking Pārvatī's milk. Most dancing figures of a child, about a foot or more in height found in Śiva temples are Sambandar images, though they are sometimes mistakenly thought to be Skanda dancing. Skanda dancing is seen only in Somāskanda images, never alone and could hardly be more than six to eight inches in height to be in correct proportion with his parents.

The present image, of fine modelling, shows Sambandar standing with the cup in the left hand and the right arm delicately pointing up. A *kiṅkiṇi sara* (girdle or bells) adorns his waist. Being a child he is shown nude. The necklace has an inverted trident as a pendent, and a *śikhā* falls over the back of the hair. (See Figs. 122 and 123)

124

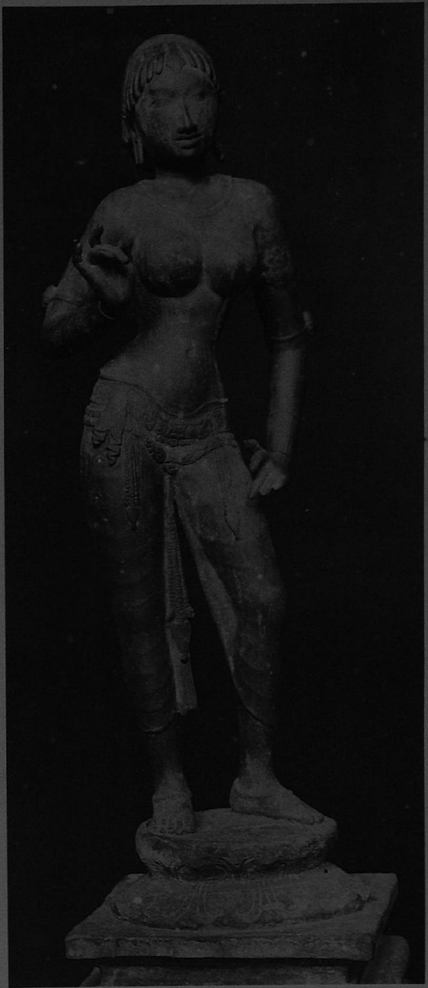
42
Sundaramūrti Nāyanār
Ht. 77 cms.
Early Chola Period, c. A.D. 950
From Kilaiyur, Thanjavur district.
Now located at Tanjore Art Gallery.

Sundaramūrti, called Ālāla Sundara and Nambi Ārūran, was born in an Ādi Śaiva Brahmin family at Thirunavalur, in Thirumunaippāḍi-nāḍu, (near modern Villuppuram), and was brought up by the local chieftain Narasimga Munaiyaraiyan. On the day of his marriage, an old man appeared in the midst of the assembly and claimed Sundaramūrti as his slave. When asked to prove his claims, the old man produced a palm leaf document, before the village-court at Thiruvennainallur, wherein it was written in the handwriting of Sundara's grandfather, that he, his family and all future generations were pledged to be slaves of Vennainallur Pittan. His claim was accepted, but when asked who he was the old man, took all of them to the village temple and pointing to the sanctum, disappeared inside. It was then realised that the old man was none other than Lord Śiva himself, who had taken this form to bestow grace on Sundaramūrti. Sundara became a great devotee visiting various temples sacred to Siva, where he sang the glories of the Lord. Later he went to the Vānmīkanātha temple of Thiruvarur, where he fell in love with and subsequently married Paravai, the dancing girl of the temple. He later married Sankili, another girl at Thiruvorriyur. He was a great friend of the Chera ruler, Cheramān Perumāl. Sundaramūrti's devotion to Śiva was so intimate that he is often called the friend of the Lord (*Tambirān Tolan*). His poems are marked by sweet and spontaneous outpourings and form the seventh book of the Devāram hymns. Sundaramūrti lived in the eight century A.D. and had left an everlasting impression on the succeeding centuries. He was the first to codify the list of the great devotees of Śiva—called the *Thiruttoṇḍat Tohai*. This list was enlarged and the episodes connected with the life of each of the 63 saints given in fine poetry during the 12th century by Sekkilar, a minister to the Chola emperor, in his great epic *Periyapurāṇam*. The Cholas were greatly fascinated by the life and works of Sundaramūrti Nāyanār. Scenes from his life are painted in a great mural executed under orders of the Chola emperor Rājarāja I in A.D. 1000 in the great temple at Thanjavur. Bronze images of Sundaramūrti and his consort

125

Paravai, were also made and consecrated in the same temple, during Rājarāja's reign. Every since, every Śiva temple came to be endowed with metal images of Sundaramūrti and his consort Paravai and Sankili and received regular worship. The bronze images of Sundaramūrti are shown standing with the left arm raised and placed over the shoulder of his consort Paravai, the right arm sportively holding a curved stick. The figure illustrated here comes from the village Kilaiyur, which has yielded several superb metal images including the Sukhāsana Śiva. As Sundara was brought up by the local chieftain, he is shown with a princely attire and as a charming youth well suited to his name, Sundara, the beautiful. The present figure is of great sensitivity and is perhaps one of the earliest to survive. (see Figs. 124 to 126)

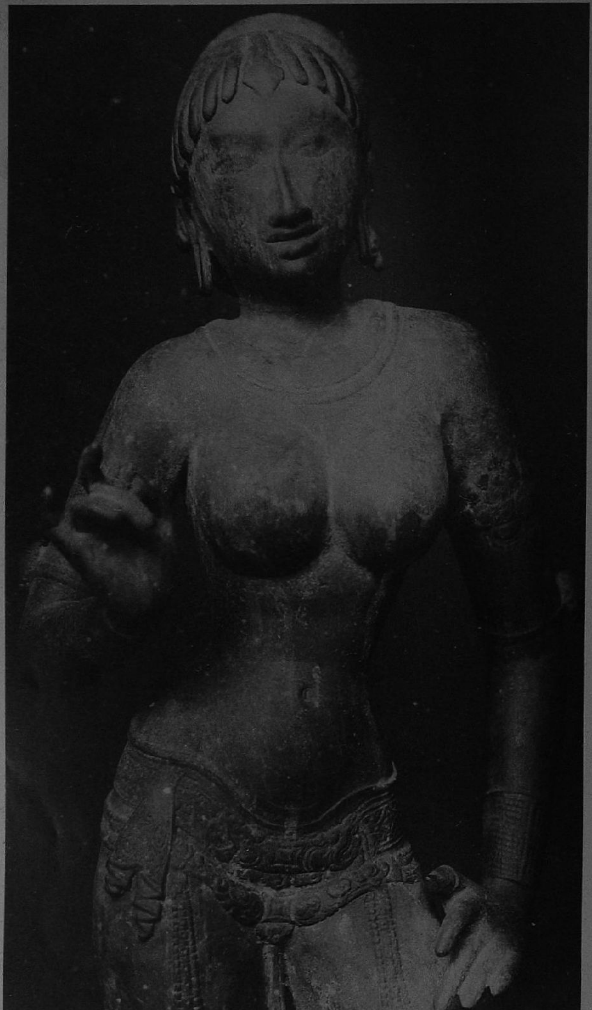
A superb figure of Paravai, his consort, exhibiting all her charms as an accomplished dancer, is now preserved in the Naṭarāja temple, Chidambaram. (see Figs. 127 to 129)



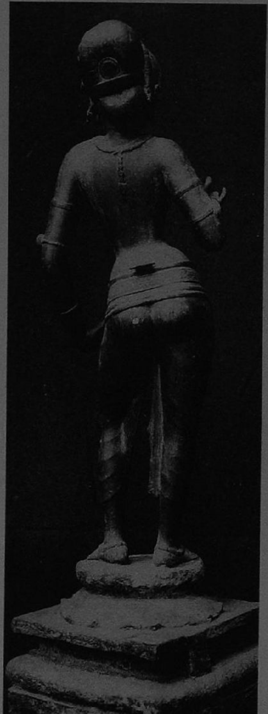
127

126

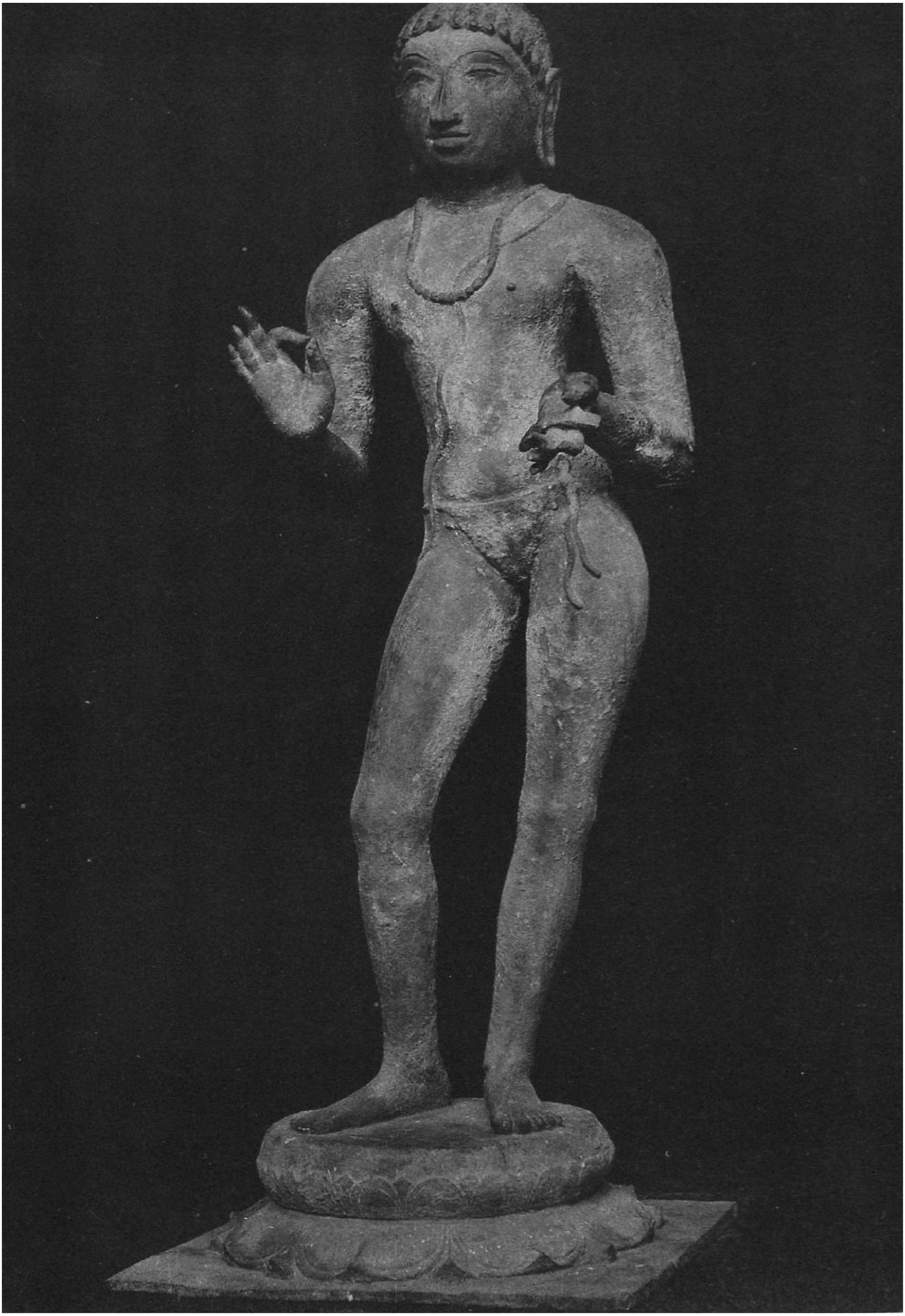
124. Sundaramūrti Nāyanār
Kilaiyur, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 950
125. Back view of 124
126. Head (close-up) of 124
127. Paravai, Chidambaram, 10th century A.D. (Front view)



128. Upper half (close-up) of 127



129. Back view of 127
130. Māṇikkavācaka, Chidambaram, c. A.D. 925



43
Māṇikkavācakar
Ht. 50.3 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100
National Museum, New Delhi.

Māṇikkavācaka was the Brahmin minister to the Pandya ruler Varaguṇa (in 9th century A.D.) who conferred on him, the little Brahmādhirāya. His poems are known for simplicity, lucidity and philosophical import. His *Thiruvembāvai* hymns and the *Thiruvācakam* hymns are recited daily reverentially by every Savite devotee of Tamilnadu. His hymns addressed to Naṭarāja, the presiding deity of Chidambaram, are matchless poems of great debth and spiritual experience. His faith in the sanctity of the five sacred syllables, the *Pañcākshara mantra* (*Namaḥ Śivāya*) is often repeated in his work. According to legends, Māṇikkavācaka, on reaching Chidambaram, sang the glories of the dancing Lord and united with the effulgent *jyoti* of Naṭarāja, never to return to the mundane earth. In all the Śiva temples, the metal images of Māṇikkavācaka are placed in the shrine of Naṭarāja near the foot of the Dancing God. The saint received initiation into Śaivite devotion (*Śiva bhakti*) in the hands of Lord Śiva Himself who appeared before him as a teacher (*Deśika-Guru*) at Thirupperunturai. Māṇikkavācaka is held as a great teacher and is portrayed standing with a palm-leaf manuscript in his left arm and the *chinmudrā* (teaching pose) in the right. He is often shown with a *kaupīna* or a short towel like undergarment. As Brahmādhirāya he wears an *upavīta*. Often the palm-leaves held in his left arm carry the *pañcākshara*, (*Namaḥ Śivāya*) inscribed. The present figure (see Fig. 131) is a good specimen and has the letters *Namaḥ Śivāya* inscribed in 12th century Tamil characters. The finest metal figure of the saint, so far known, which recaptures the yogic stance and greatness of Māṇikkavācaka, is now preserved in the Naṭarāja temple Chidambaram. (see Fig. 130)

131

131. Māṇikkavācaka, National Museum, New Delhi, c. A.D. 1100
132. Māṇikkavācaka, Koilpattu,
Kodavasal, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1250
133. Detail of hand of 132, showing inscription of the palm leaf which reads *Om namaś śivāya*

132

44
Māṇikkavācaka
Ht. 53 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1250
From Koilpattu village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Koneśvara temple, Kodavasal.

The saint Māṇikkavācaka's popularity from the ninth century onwards is evidenced both by the literary and epigraphical references, his soul-stirring poems on Śiva moving millions. A poet, a philosopher and a devotee, Māṇikkavācaka is a rare combination, singing in sweet words of his profound experiences. He is personified as a teacher, holding a palm-leaf Mss in his left arm, the right hand, like that of Dakshiṇāmūrti in *chinmudrā*, the teacher's pose. The Thirupperunturai Śiva temple where he received initiation at the hands of Lord Śiva himself under a *kurundai* tree, and where he spent the major part of his religious life, the sanctum contains not a Śiva Liṅga as in all other temples, but an altar, symbolic of the Śaiva philosophy preached by the saint.

The Mss held in the left arm of this image is inscribed with the sacred words *Om Namaś śivāya* in Tamil Grantha letters of the thirteenth century A.D. that allows us to date it to this period. The mantra occurs on other images of the saint as well. His characteristic lower garment is the *kaupīna* or short loin cloth of the type seen in the present image. We also notice an undulating *upavīta* and a *rudrāksha mālā*. The curling hair is arranged like a fan at the back. The broad eyes, the slightly parted lips and the gentle *tribhaṅga* suggest divine joy.

The God of Gods, the King of Gods unknown,
King of the Three; what teeming worlds create,
Preserve, destroy, the First, Essence the Sire
of Sires; Father divine: whose half the Mother is;
The King of all, He came and made me, too, his own.
Henceforth I am no one's vessal; no I fear!
We've reached the goal;
with servants of his Saints
in sea of bliss we ever more shall bathe!
(Tr. by G.C. Pople—*Thiruccatakam*—No. 120)
(For illustration see Figs. 132 and 133)

133

134

45
Nandi
(The bull of Śiva)
Ht. 49.5 cms.
Later Chola, c. A.D. 1200
From Virattesvarar temple, Korukkai,
Now in the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi,
Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 23

Proud and sturdy enough to carry on its back the great Lord, Śiva Mahādeva—the weight of whose little finger sent the great Kailasa mountain along with the demon Rāvaṇa to the nether world,—Nandī, the bull plays on important role in Śaiva imagery. Śiva as Rudra, is called a bull in Vedas and according to the legends, Vishṇu, the embodiment of *dharma* bears Śiva as a white bull. Vishṇu himself is praised as the mountain dwelling, wide-pacing bull (*giri kshite urugāyāya vṛishṇe*). In the temple plan Nandī is invariably placed in front of the sanctum of Śiva. Some outstanding firures of Nandī were commissioned by the Paḻuveṭṭaraiya chieftains, who ably lent support to the Cholas in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. Metal images of Nandī reclining were also placed in front of the sanctum and were not generally taken out in procession. Some of the finest examples of Nandī in metal, of the Chola age are still in site in temples of the Thanjavur region. (See Figs. 134 and 135)

134. Nandi, Korukkai, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district. c. A.D. 1200
135. Back view of 134

136

136. Kudiraichokkar, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district. c. A.D. 1250

46
Kudiraichokkar
(Śiva as a horse merchant)
Ht. Horse 72 cms.; Chokkar 51.5 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1250
Jambukeśvara temple Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district.

The sixty-four sports of Śiva, the beautiful (Sundara), presiding deity of the Pandya country, are described in two great Tamil words, the *Thiruvilayādal purāṇam* and the *sthala purāṇa hālāsya māhātmya*. In one of these the Lord, here called Sundareśvara, is a horse trader to protect his devotee, Māṇikkavācaka, the great Śaivite saint, who has left behind some soul-stirring poems on the God. Māṇikkavācaka, the story goes, was a minister to the Pandya king who sent him to purchase horses for the cavalry. The saint, who could think of nought but the Lord spent all the money in the service. He was thereupon imprisoned when Śiva intervened, appearing before the king in the guise of a horse trader to present him several hundred horses, as those supposedly bought by the saint. This secured the saint's release, but the horses were really jackals who resumed their original forms to devour the horses of the royal cavalry. The king realised the error of his actions, and himself became a devotee.

The tale is often enacted in several festivals called *Nariyai Pariyākkiyatu* (turning jackals into horses). The tale is often enacted in sacred festivals particularly at the Mīnākshī temple, Madurai. Metal images of Śiva riding on a horse in the attire of a merchant of the type reproduced here were consecrated on these occassions and are called *Kudiraichokkar* (the beautiful horse trader) in Tamil. (see Figs 136 and 137)

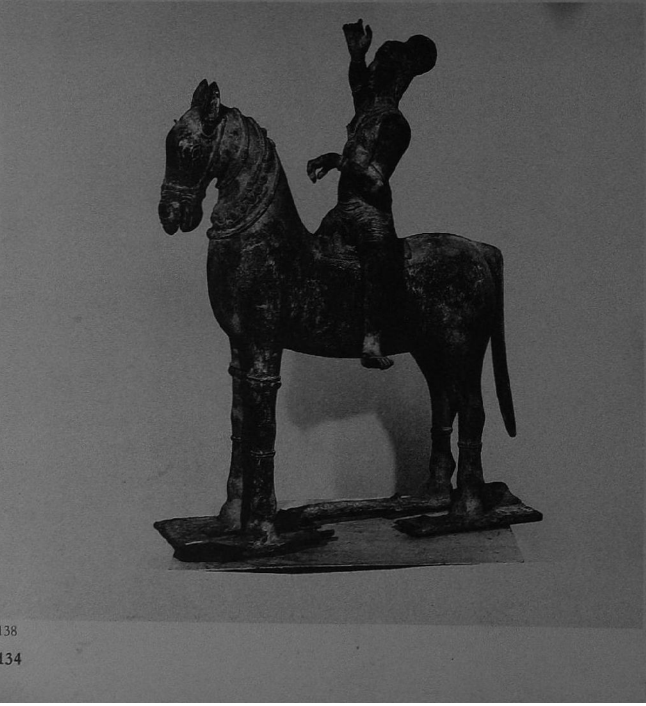
137

47
Kudiraichokkar
(Śiva as a horse merchant)
Ht. Horse 75.5 cms; Chokkar 55.5 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1250
Jambukeśvara temple. Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district.

This image, also from the Thiruvanaikka temple, is of somewhat better quality, the rendering of the horse being more animated, the detailing more elaborate. From the point of view of technique, the figure of Śiva is solid cast, while the horse is hollow with a burnt clay core, features to be noted in earlier images. Thus Rājarāja Chola's inscription at Thanjavur refers to the metal figure of the bull made along with the image of Vṛishbhāntika, Śiva, as being hollow cast (*ghanappollal āha ceydal*), while the beautiful bull of the Vṛishavāhana image from Tandantottam is hollow inside.

The two Kudiraicchokkar statues (Figs. 136 and 138) are the first of the Chola representations of the subject to come to light, these images being comparatively rare, though other examples are known, notably the one from Thiruvidaimarudur.

Cracks are to be noticed on all the four legs of the horse. These were evidently caused by the strain and stress of carrying this rather large image in a procession. (see Fig. 138)



138

137. Head (detail) of 136
138. Kudiraichokkar, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district, c. A.D. 1250

139

139. Gaṇeśa, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000

140. Back view of 139

48
Gaṇeśa
Ht. 41 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
From the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 33

Gaṇeśa, like the goddess Kālī, is the God of the masses. He wards off all obstacles and bestows success on all human endeavours. Being the eldest son of Lord Śiva, he is called Pillaiyār (son) in Tamil; as warder of inauspicious happenings, he is Vighneśvara and as the leader of the Gaṇa, he is Gaṇeśa. He is worshipped at the beginning of all rites and festivals. He is a benign personality never assuming a terrifying aspect. He is worshipped in simple surroundings on the banks of rivers, ponds, lakes, under the shades of tree, often without any shrine to house him. Simple abodes of Gaṇeśa, however, exist in the village and it is here that community transactions or the narration of epics or legend takes place.

Gaṇeśa also appears as the *parivāra devatā* both in the Śiva and Vaishṇava temples where he is endowed with a subsidiary shrine. Gaṇeśa, the God of the masses, is also the great Lord, Mahāgaṇapati, of the classical pantheon. He also heads the seven mothers (*saptamātās*) in his aspect as Gaṇanātha. He is the embodiment of celibacy and is worshipped as a Brahmacārin though he is occassionally accompanied by his consorts Siddhi and Buddhi, personifications of achievement and knowledge. Gaṇeśa is the embodiment of wisdom and was the legendary scribe who committed the *Mahābhārata* to writing. He is also allied to the sacred symbol OM, and occupies an important position in the decoration of temples, his images invariably found in the sanctum tower from Pallava times (A.D. 700) if not earlier. Metal images of Gaṇeśa are also essential to temples as it is imperative that he be carried at the head of all processions, leading all the gods. Epigraphical records of the Chola period refer to the consecration of metal icons of Gaṇeśa and offerings instituted in honour of the God. In the great temple of Thanjavur built by Rājarāja I (A.D. 1000), for example, many metal images of Gaṇapati were made and consecrated. A record from the temple also mentions the 150 plantain fruits offered, daily to the God. Possessing an elephant head, Gaṇeśa is offered fruits and leaves, favoured by elephants in addition to the usual food.

By virtue of his position at the head of processions, Gaṇeśa was subject to assume a standing posture so that most of his images are of this type, though seated images are also known. The present sculpture is a good specimen of the Chola period and shows the God standing on a lotus placed over a square pedestal. Though the belly is full, it is not over-emphasized. The four arms carry the axe and the tusk in the upper and lower right, a wheel-shaped rosary and a rounded sweet in the upper and lower left hands. The trunk is fairly long and turned to the left, a mango perched on its tip. The figure is smoothly modelled, with gentle inward looking eyes that infuses it with dignity and a noble grace. (see Figs. 139 and 140)

49
Gaṇeśa

Ht. 45 cms.
Late Chola period, c. A.D. 1200
From the Kailasanātha temple, Nedungudi, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thyāgarāja temple, Thiruvarur, Thanjavur district.

Gaṇeśa, standing, four armed is holding the axe and the noose in the upper arms and the broken tusk and a *laḍḍuka* in the lower arms. He wears a high crown. The waist band falls into small 'U' in between the thighs. The figure is made of copper and the pedestal, a later one of brass. (see Figs. 141 and 142)

141

141. Gaṇeśa, Nedungudi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1200

142

142. Back view of 141

143

143. Gaṇeśa, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district, c. A.D. 1200

144. Back view of 143

144

50
Gaṇeśa
Ht. 53.5 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1200
From the Jambukeśvara temple, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district.

Ganpati, alert and tensely standing with his weight thrown on the short left leg, the right hip thrust outwards. The full, massive belly was over the thighs largely concealing the girdle with little pendent bells. Anklets with tiny bells are to be seen on both feet. A cobra, its raised hood and tail meeting near the naval, serves as *upavīta*. The necklace is broad and intricate.

The god is four armed; the upper right holds a broken tusk used for transmitting the epic *Mahābhārata*; the lower right pointed probably held a noose; the upper left holds a cup full of round sweets (*laḍḍuka*) on which rests the trunk and the lower left hand is placed atop a long handled axe, resembling a *gadā* which rests on the pedestal.

The broad and fan like ears of the elephant head stand out over the shoulders. The hair is dressed in a *jaṭāmakuṭa* with a lotus crest.

The image is distinct from the local idiom, being clearly indebted to the medieval style of eastern India in the headdress, the swift sideward movement of the trunk, the pendent axe and the cup heaped with sweets. An interesting stone sculpture of Gaṇeśa from eastern India, and made of the smooth black stone characteristic of that region now in the Nageśvara temple of Kumbakonam, seems to have been the inspiration for this image. The image could have been brought either from Bengal during the campaign of Rājendra Chola I (A.D. 1020) or by his successors during their conquest of Kalinga. The resemblance between the two is striking even though the bronze Gaṇapati is later than the stone sculpture by about at least three-hundred years. Recently another bronze image of Gaṇeśa of same form and age has been discovered as treasure and is now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery. (See Figs. 143 and 144)

145

145. Gaṇeśa, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1200

51
Gaṇeśa
Ht. 54 cms.
Chola, c. A.D. 1200
From the Vardhamaneśvarar Temple, Sekal.
Now in the Maruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi. Thanjavur District.
Acc. No. 1

Gaṇeśa stands on a lotus placed over a sqaure pedestal. The belly is rounded and bulging. The axe, noose, tusk and the sweets are small in proportion to the body as are the ears. The conical crown is proportionately smaller. (See Fig.145)

52
Sūrya
Ht. 65 cms.
Early Chola period c. A.D. 975–1000
From the Malai Iśvara temple (a subsidiary shrine oı Kāyārohaṇa temple) Nagappattinam.
Now in the Kāyārohaṇa temple, Nagappattinam, Thanjavur district.

Sūrya, the Sun God, is the most prominent of the solar deities. He is praised in the Vedas as far seeing and all seeing, the spy of the whole world, who beholds the good and bad deeds of mortals. He is the gaurdian of all that moves or is stationary and men aroused by Him, attain their goals and perform their labours. In the Tamil country the worship of Sūrya is also of remote antiquity. The Chola dynasty, claimed descent from Sūrya and consecration of stone and metal images of the God is mentioned in their inscriptions where he is sometimes called Āditta Bhaṭṭāra. *Śilappadhikāram*, the Tamil epic assigned to the second-third century A.D. begins with an invocation to the Sun. Pongal, the festival of harvest and offerings to the Sun God, is celebrated by the people of Tamilnadu on a grand scale.

Sūrya plays a vital role in temple ritual as well. The very layout of the temple plan, in its mystic diagram (Vāstu-purusha maṇḍala) is regulated by the movement of Sūrya and the temple, in most cases, is oriented towards the East, so much so, that at least on one day in a year, the rays of the rising Sun, fall directly into the sanctum, a day considered most auspicious when special rituals are performed. In both the Śaiva and Vaishṇava systems, Sūrya is identified with the Supreme Being. Thus in Śiva temples, he is called Śiva Sūrya and in Vishṇu temples, Sūrya Nārāyaṇa; and his worship precedes that of the main deity both during daily as well as special rites.

Sūrya is also conceived as one of the eight attendant deities (*ashṭa parivāra devatā*) and in this aspect should have a sub-shrine of his own in a typical temple plan. His image is generally placed on the eastern face of the upper tier of a temple. Shrines solely dedicated to Sūrya—as at Sūryanarkoil in Thanjavur district, are also known.

Sūrya is in most cases shown as a youth, standing erect, (*samabhaṅga*), two armed, and holding a lotus in each hand. The crown is generally a *karaṇḍamakuṭa*. A circular disc, representing his orb, is placed behind the head and crown. All these features are to be found in a splendid image of Sūrya, noticed here for the first time and to be assigned to the early Chola period (c. A.D. 975). We also notice here broad necklaces, an *upavīta*, a jewelled belt across the abdomen, and an eloborately worked waist band with a lionine buckle. The scarf at the waist forms a U-shaped loop falling between the thighs. While the body of the God is of copper, the pedestal is made of brass. (see Fig. 146)

146. Sūrya, Nagapattinam,
Thanjavur district, c. between A.D. 975 and 1000

146

53
Sūrya
Ht. 42 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1150
From the Vardhamānesvarar temple; Sekal,
Now in Maruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi,
Thanjavur district. Ace. No. Sekal. 10

Sūrya stands erect on a lotus placed over a square pedestal. The waist-scarf forms the characteristic U-shape, but less prominently so significantly than the other image illustrated here (Cat. No. 54). The waist ornament is secured by the lion-headed clasp and the abdominal ornament is present. A special feature of the image is that it wears a *channavīra* in addition to the *upavīta*, both the ornaments generally not being shown together. Sūrya being a Vedic God, the presiding deity Savitā of the *Gāyatrīmantra*, it is but natural for him to wear an *upavīta*. But he is also the hero, who drives away evil doors and sorcerors and it is in this aspect that he wears the heroic *channavīra*. The God holds lotuses in both the hands, broad necklaces adorn the neck, and ornaments set with diamonds adorn the ears. A *karaṇḍa-makuṭa* covers the head and at the back is the disc-like halo touching the shoulders. (see Figs. 147 and 148)

147

147. Sūrya, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1150
148. Back view of 147

148

54
Sūrya
Ht. 44 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1100
From the Virattana temple, Korukkai village.
Now in the Maruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 13

Sūrya is often conceived as riding the skies in a chariot with one wheel, the wheel signifying the circle of his movement through sky and also his ownership of the celestial *cakra*. In this image, the full blown lotus is placed on a circular, instead of the usual rectangular pedestal, subtly alluding to this aspect of Sūrya's character.

The waist cloth takes the well defined U-shape, the ends tugged in at the sides. The belt consisting of several girdles is unusually broad and reaches even above the navel. The leonine clasp is present with a plantain flower like pendent hanging in between. The expressions of the face is heightened by the receding conical crown and the disc-like aureole at the back.

The bronze has the sculptural quality of works produced during the reign of the Chola emperor, Kulottunga I, who ruled between 1070–1125 A.D. and may be assigned to that period. In connection with him it is worth recalling that he was related to the Eastern Chalukya rulers who had close connections with the Kalinga country where the great Sun temple of Konarak was built at this time. Kulottunga himself was a great devotee of the Sun God. He assumed the title *Chola Mārtaṇḍa* (the Sun among the Cholas) and built a temple solely dedicated to Sūrya, at Suryanarkoil in Thanjavur district, were worship continues to be performed. (see Fig. 149).

149

149. Sūrya, Korukkai village,
Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1100

150

150. Saraswatī, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 1000

151. Back view of 150

55
Sarasvatī
Ht. 21.5 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
Treasure trove find from Kadalangudi, Thanjavur district.
Now in Thanjavur Art Gallery.

Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Learning, is adored independently and also as consort of Brahmā, the creator, her worship prescribed in the daily ritual of both Śiva and Vishṇu temples. She is usually shown seated in *vīrāsana* pose on a white lotus seat. Three hands hold rosary (*aksha mālā*), vase of water (*amṛitakalaśa*), palm-leaf book, the fourth being in *abhaya mudrā*. The hair is done in a *jaṭāmakuṭa* and should carry the pearl *upavīta*. She should wear a crescent moon according to the *Sūta Samhitā*.

In a temple the main building containing the sanctum is identified with the Purusha, the maṇḍapa (pavilion) in front with Śakti. It is natural thus to find images of the four Śaktis, Durgā, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī and Jyeshṭhā in the sculptural programme of the *maṇḍapa*, Sarasvatī appearing either on the northern or southern side, in the Pallava temples. Durgā, Lakshmī and Sarasvatī are also worshipped as a trinity and in this aspect, all three are shown seated on a lotus, and annointed by two elephants. The Sundaravaradapperumāl temple at Uttaramerur near Kanchipuram has an image of seated Sarasvatī as Vākdevī with the usual attributes and with two elephants, one on either side. In the great temple of Gangaikoṇḍacholapuram built by Rājendra Chola I (A.D. 1025) we also find a fine stone sculpture of Sarasvatī in the *maṇḍapa*. Oṭṭakkūttan (twelfth century A.D.) one of the great poets of the Chola age build a separate temple to Sarasvatī, the image installed there being still under worship. Metal images of Sarasvatī, however, are very rare, the few so far known being small in size. This may be due to her being a secondary deity, who was probably not taken out in procession.

The image exhibited here shows the Goddess seated on a lotus, the upper hand holding a rosary and a palm-leaf book; the lower right hand grasps a jar, the left being raised in *abhaya mudrā*. The Goddess wears an *upavīta* of pearls and *jaṭāmakuṭa* with the crescent moon. (see Figs 150 and 151)

152. Vishṇ, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 750

152

56
Vishṇu
Ht. 47 cms.
Early Pallava period, c. A.D. 750
From Vānmikanātha temple, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thyāgarāja temple, Thiruvarur, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 178.

The worship of Vishṇu in the Tamil land goes back to a period before the Christian era. He is considered the presiding deity of the *mullai* tract, and is the most popular and widely mentioned divinity of the Sangam age. He is the presiding deity of *dharma* (righteousness) and as promulgator of orderly societies, the kings often likened themselves to Vishṇu. Twelve Saints called—Alvars, spread the path of devotion to Vishṇu, throughout the South, by their efforts. Included among them, was the young girl Āṇḍāl, whose immortal hymns to Vishṇu are on the lips of every Hindu even to this day. In the architectural plans of towns and villages, Vishṇu occupies the central position, his temple to be located in the middle of the village or town. Several Pallava village foundations of the seventh or eighth century, had the village assembly-halls in the central building that housed the image of Vishṇu. All the secular, judicial and administrative transactions of the village were conducted here, in the immediate presence of Lord Vishṇu, the protector of *dharma*. His temples are found in all the fully developed village settlements. Unlike the Śiva temples where the metal images are kept in separate sub-shrines, metal image in Vishṇu shrines, in keeping with the Āgamas, are placed in the main sanctum immediately in front of the main deity. Among the manifestations of Vishṇu (called *avatāras*) Rāma, Kṛishṇa and Narasimha alone seem to have been made by metal artists, other incarnations being cast only in later times. Metal images of Vishṇu with his consorts seem to have been the most popular, and several small images of Vishṇu, assignable to the Pallava age are known. An exceptionally fine and unique representation of the Pallava period is the Trivikrama, now under worship in Singanallur in Coimbatore district. The figure exhibited, noticed and published here for the first time, is also an outstanding example of the Pallava period and shows the Lord standing on a lotus placed on a square pedestal. The heavy lower garment reaches to below the knee. The waist scarf is tied with a loop and fan-like knot at the sides, the ends hanging almost to the ankle. The rolled waist cloth falls in a broad loop both on the thighs and at the back. A chain with pendent hangs between the legs. The lower right hand is in *varada* pose and the left must have been placed on a mace, now missing. The leonine clasp is present at the waist. The broad *upavīta* passes over the right arm, and the chest is decorated with beautiful necklaces. Vishṇu who is known for his love for dress and ornaments (*alankāra priyo Vishṇu*) wears a jewelled crown. The upper arms carry the *cakra* and conch, the edge of the *cakra* being in line with the shoulder and not facing the front in the *prayoga* manner. The conch and discuss are held securely by supporting struts issuing from the shoulders. At the back, is a carefully worked *śiraścakra* with a pendent. The curls of hair are arranged over the back in two tiers. The *upavīta* is made of pearls. (see Figs. 152 and 153)

153. Back view of 152 153

154

57
Vishṇu
Ht. 21.7 cms.
Pallava period, 9th century A.D.
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 66.4
(see Fig. 154)

58
Vishṇu
Ht. 91.5 cms.
Early Chola period c. A.D. 925
From Kalyāṇavaradaraja temple, Paruthiyur village, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Koneśvara temple, Kudavasal,

The image is a very fine example of the early Chola period. Standing in *samabhaṅga*, the image of Vishṇu is elaborately worked in the region of the waist, the ornaments including the broad *simha* clasp and the characteristic waist garment with a U-shaped loop between the legs. The *cakra* in the upper right hand has its edge facing the worshiper. The lower right hand is in *abhaya mudrā*. The jewellery and ornaments though rich are treated with restraint. The round face, crowned by a tall *kirīṭa* is of exquisite beauty. (see Figs. 155 to 157)

155. Vishṇu, Paruthiyur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 925. (Front view)

156. Upper half (detail) of 155

156

157. Back view of 155

157

158

159

158. Vishṇu Śrīnivāsa, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 975
159. Back view of 158

59
Vishṇu Śrīnivāsa
Ht. 59 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 975
From Vānmikanātha temple, Thiruneipper, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Thyāgarāja temple, Thiruvarur, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 176.

Vishṇu stands on a lotus placed over a square pedestal. He is four armed, the *cakra* in the upper right hand being held at an angle. The lower right arm is broken. The crown is somewhat slender.

The necklace, the armlets, and the lion faced clasp in the waist are worked with care and delicacy. The charming face, the noble proportions, and the careful workmanship make this sculpture as one of outstanding quality. (see Figs 158–159)

60
Vishṇu
Ht. 45 cms.
Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
From Thiruvidaimarudur temple, Thanjavur district.
Now in the Maruntāśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.
Acc. No. 15

A characteristic image of Vishṇu with the usual four arms, the *cakra* held by the upper right missing. (see Fig. 160 and 161)

160

160. Vishṇu, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1100

161. Back view of 160

161

162

162. Vishṇu, National Museum, New Delhi, c. 10th century A.D.

61
Vishṇu
Ht. 26 cms.
Early Chola period, c. 10th century A.D.
National Museum, New Delhi.
Acc. No. 70.4
(see Fig. 162)

62
Vishṇu
Ht. 83 cms.
Chola period, c. 12th century A.D.
National Museum, New Delhi
Acc. No. 59.204/1
(see Fig. 163)

163

163. Vishṇu, National Museum, New Delhi, c. 12th century A.D.

164 to 166. Śrī Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā
Paruthiyur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950

164. Lakshmaṇa
165. Śrī Rāma
166. Sītā

164

165

166

167

167. Head (close-up) of 165.

63

Śrī Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā

Ht. Rāma 92 cms.; Lakshmaṇa 73 cms.; Sītā 67 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950
From the Kalyāṇavaradarāja temple, Paruthiyur, Thanjavur district.

The images of Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā is very fine group of the early Chola age. The figure of Rāma is a picture of elegance and majesty. Two armed Rāma is standing, holding the *kodaṇḍa* bow in the left arm and an arrow in the right arm. The raised left arm holds in a very suggestive and delicate manner, the gesture (*mudrā*) of holding the bow *kodaṇḍa*, which gives him the name Kodaṇḍa Rāma. The waist bands are secured by the leonine buckle. The ornaments he wears are those worn by the *chakravartins* (great emperors). But it is the highly impressive grace and charm of the face that make this a masterpiece of art. So is the figure of Lakshmaṇa, the brother of Rāma, standing like his brother, two armed holding bow and arrow. While Rāma wears *upavīta*, Lakshmaṇa wears a *channavīra*, the symbol of a warrior. Rāma wears a jewelled crown, while Lakshmaṇa has a *keśamakuṭa*. The figure of Sītā equally a great work of art is standing in *tribhaṅga* pose; she holds the right arm in *kaṭaka* pose to hold a flower.

Rāma, two armed, is generally shown in the 10th and 11th century Chola bronzes as Kodaṇḍa Rāma. The great Chola emperor, Āditya assumed the title Kodaṇḍarāma. It was the time that the greatest of Tamil poets, Kamban, composed his Rāmāyaṇa in Tamil, a classical poem of outstanding merit, known for its chastity of language, lucid expression and lyrical quality. Its impact was profound, and was reflected in the images of Rāma, Lakshmaṇa, Sītā and Hanumān, especially the metal ones. Almost all the masterpieces of Rāma group in bronze, like the ones from Vadakkuppanaiyur, now in the Madras Museum, the group from Thincarai in Thanjavur district under worship, the ones from Kappalur, etc. belong to 10th century and were made under the influence of Kamban's *Rāma-Kathā*.

Paruthiyur has yielded the superlative Vishṇu, included in this catalogue. The village Thiruccerai, where the other group of Rāma of the same age is found, is near this village and it is possible that a family of metal sculptors specialised in making images of Rāma group. (see Figs. 164 and 170)

168

168. Back view of 165

169

169. Head (close-up) of 166.

170

170. Head (close-up) of 164.

171

171 Kāliyamardana Kṛishna,
National Museum, New Delhi, c. A.D. 950

64

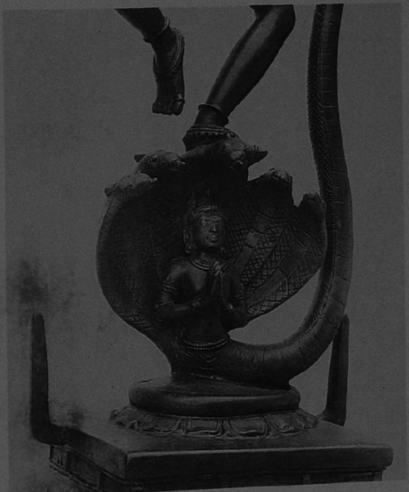
Kāliya Kṛishṇa

(Kṛishṇa subduing the serpent Kāliya)
Ht. 59 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950
National Museum, New Delhi.

Kṛishṇa's subduing of the serpent demon, Kāliya by dancing over the head, (called *Kāliya nartana*) was quite popular among metal artists. Among the portrayal so far known, the present figure, which was originally in the collection of N.Y. Sastri, Madras, later acquired by the National Museum, is the finest Kṛishṇa, shown as a young boy, dancing on the back of the five-hooded serpent affording protection to the *gopas* with his right arm. The whole weight of Kṛishṇa's body, thrown on the left leg is balanced on the back of the serpent hood. It is a great tribute to the artist's skill, to cast such delicate work in metal, who has also captured admirably the childhood of Kṛishṇa in the charming face. (see Figs. 171 to 173)

172

172. Back view of 171.



173

173. Kāliya serpent (close-up) of 171

174

174. Bāla Kṛishṇa, State Archaeology Department, Tamilnadu, 12th century A.D.

65
Bālakṛishṇa
(Kṛishṇa as a child)
Ht. 18.5 cms.
Later Chola period, 12th century A.D.
From Jambai village, South Arcot district;
Now in the collection of Tamilnadu State Archaeology Department, Madras.

The Vasihṇava Ālvars particularly Periyalvar, have sung rapturously of the child Kṛishṇa, the form in which he puts the big toe in his mouth being popular both with poets and artists. A large number of these images are known and are commonly found in Vishṇu temples, as a part of the worship. The priests permit the devotees to touch or hold this image in the hand for a few seconds, a privilege, that transforms into Nanda or Yaśodā for a few moments. This particular image of Bālakṛishṇa is one of the finest so far known. The God lies on his back, putting the right foot towards his mouth, pressing down on his thigh in order to accomplish his purpose. (see Figs. 174 to 176)

175

176

175. Another view of 174
176. Back view of 174

177

177. Yoga Narasimha, National Museum, New Delhi, 13th century A.D.

178. Devī as Umā Parameśvarī, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950

179. Back view of 178

66

Yoga Narasimha

(Vishṇu as Narasimha in yoga pose)
Ht. 40.5 cms.
Later Chola period, 13th century A.D.
National Museum, New Delhi.

Among the ten incarnations of Vishṇu, Narasimha, Rāma and Krishṇa are the most frequently represented manifestations in metal. The Āgamas prescribing the worship of Vishṇu, speak of four types of images, made to suit the different requirements of the devotees. They are—Yoga mūrti (the image for bestowal of Yoga), Bhoga mūrti (the image for bestowing pleasure and prosperity), Vīra mūrti (the image for the instilling heroism) and Ābhicārika mūrti (the image for destroying the enemies). There has been a great preference in the south for the Yoga form of Narasimha, found in large numbers in stone and metal. In the layout of temples, the Yoga Narasimha is found in the *grīvā* portion of the temples including Siva temples. The present image is of the 13th century. (see Fig. 177).

178

179

67

Devī as Umā Paramesvari

(Goddess as consort of Lord of the Universe)
Ht. 68 cms.
Early chola period, c. A.D. 950
From the Piravāmaruntīśvara temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.

The bronze carries a Tamil inscription in Chola characters of about A.D. 950, recording the consecration of the image called Umā Parameśvarī, by a certain individual named Devan Paḻippili, who also made provisions for its worship. On its basis the image can be securely dated to the mid-tenth century, and should thus throw valuable light on the development of bronze sculpture at this time when the age of Parāntaka Chola I was coming to a close. Umā is shown standing on a lotus pedestal, the right side slightly bent, the weight of the body thrown on the left. She wears a striped lower garment extending almost upto the ankle, fastened to the waist by *mekhalā*; a *channavīra* adorns the body; a broad necklace and a *tāli* decorate the neck. The right hand is in *kaṭaka* as if to hold the *nīlotpala*, while the left is extended along the side. Throughout there is an emphasis on the full and sensuous form especially in the treatment of breasts and the back. The nose is damaged at the top. (see Figs. 178 and 179)

180

181

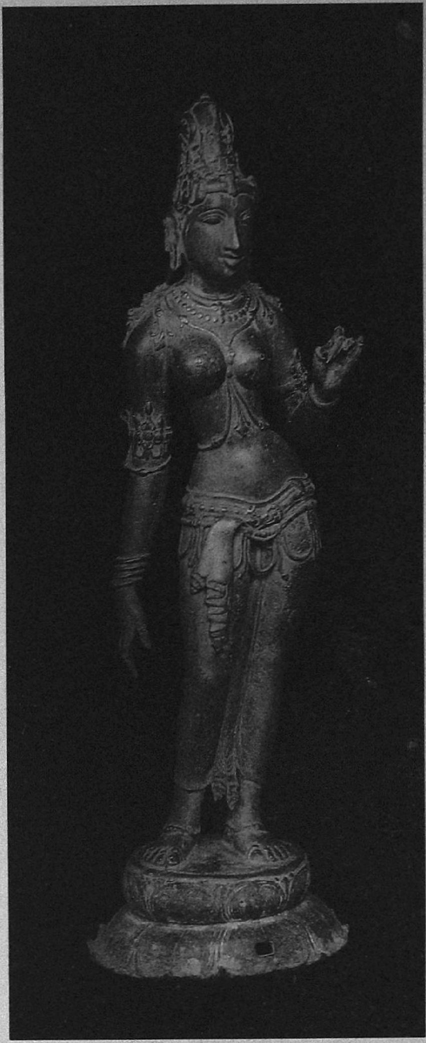
68
Umā
Ht. 65 cms.
From Korukkai village, Thanjavur district.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 950.
(see Figs 180 and 181)

180. Umā, Korukkai village, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 950
181. Back view of 180

69
Umā
Ht. 68.5 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 975
From Nallur village, Thanjavur district
Now in Tiruridaimarudur temple,

This masterpiece represents the mature Sembiyan Mahādevī school around A.D. 975. It bears close resemblance to the superb sculpture in Konerirājapuram temple including the superlative Tripurāntaka and Tripurasundarī and the Kalyāṇasundara group. Umā is in the most graceful *tribhaṅga*, a pose preferred by Chola artists, especially of the Sembiyan Mahādevī school who rendered it with unsurpassed elegance. The drapery, jewellery and the head dress are done with extreme care, it being evident that considerable attention was lavished on the wax model itself. The head is gently tilted to the left, and the posture of the body and the arms is imbued with the rhythm of the dame, reminding us that the Goddess herself was a great dancer, a fitting companion to the Lord of the Dance himself.

Every detail of this splendid image is executed with exquisite perfection, the hand of the master artist being visible in little details like the *makara* clasp at the waist and the flutter of cloth resting on the thigh. The *keśamakuṭa*, decorated with exquisite taste adds charm to the expressive face. (see Fig. 182)



182. Umā, Nallur village,
Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 975

182

183

184

184. Back view of 183

70

Śivakāmī

Ht. 57 cms.

Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100

From Jambunāthaswamy temple, Vaipur, Thanjavur district.

(see Figs 183 and 184)

183. Śivakāmī, vaipur, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1100

185

185. Devī, Vilangudi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1100

186

186. Śrīdevī, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district, c. A.D. 1000

71
Devī
Ht. 51 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100
From Akshayapurīśvara temple, Vilangudi, Thanjavur district.
(see Fig. 185).

72
Śrīdevī
Ht. 70 cms.
Early Chola period, c. A.D. 1000
In the Piravāmarantīśvarar temple, Thiruthuraippundi, Thanjavur district.

Though coming from a Śiva temple, the figure is really representation of the Goddess Śrī, consort of Vishṇu, distinguished by her breast-band. The Goddess Pārvatī never appears with this item of clothing which appears only in Durgā or Kālī images. Vishṇu images made of stone or metal were consecrated in Śiva temples for the worship of Vishṇu, form part of Śiva ritual also. An inscription of Rājarāja Chola I, refers to the consecration of a metal image of Mahāvishṇu in the great temple of Thanjavur. This figure of Śrī Devī indicates the presence of an image of Vishṇu with consorts in the Śiva temple of Thiruthuraippundi, which has already yielded several masterpieces of the early Chola age, some of which are included in this exhibition. (see Fig. 186)

187

188

187. Pārvatī, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district, c. A.D. 1100
188. Back view of 187.

73
Pārvatī
Ht. 64 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100
From the Jambukeśvara temple, Thiruvanaikka, Thiruchi district.

An increase in the number of temple festivals in the later Chola period resulted in the production of greater number of bronzes. This seems to have affected quality for the exquisite refinement of form, and the smooth flowing modelling began to wane after A.D. 1100. Nevertheless the high excellance of the early Chola age can be occassionally seen as in this figure. The soft and mellifluous contour, the sinuous, ingratiating lines, the exceptional simplicity of costume and jewellery, the tender expression of the face, all produce an image of singular elegance and sensitivity.

The *śiraścakra* and pendent at the back show new forms and trends. The waist band and ornaments have lost their prominence. (see Figs 187 and 188)

189. Āyyanar with Pūrṇā and Pushkalā, From Thiruvidaimarudur, Thanjavur Art Gallery, c. A.D. 1100

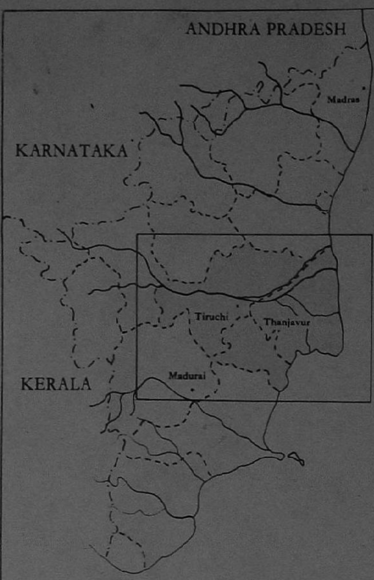
74

Ayyanar with Pūrṇā and Pushkalā

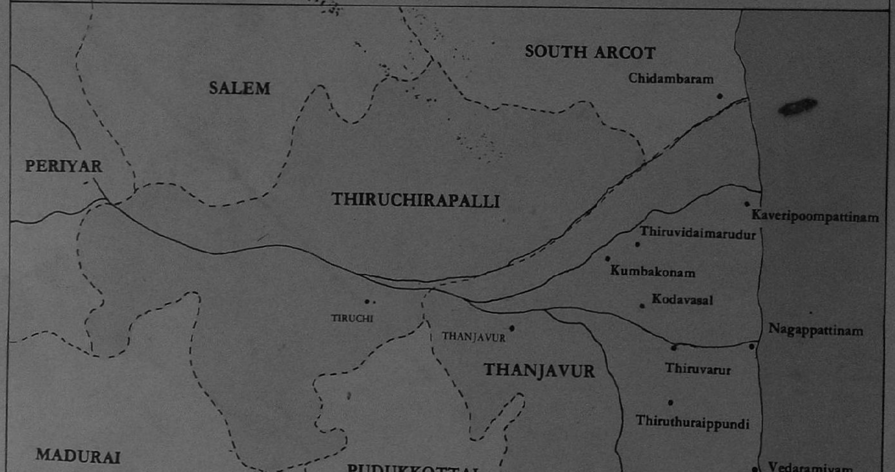
Ht. 29 cms.
Later Chola period, c. A.D. 1100
Treasure trov find from Thiruvidaimarudur, Thanjavur district.
Now in Thanjavur Art Gallery.

Ayyanar also called Sasta, Bhusanatha, Revanta, Arya, Svetamatanga, is the protector of the hunters and forest dwellers. His worship, widely prevelant in northern India in the early centuries of the Christian era under the name of Revanta as also known in the South from early times. The Tamil epic refers to his temple as Puranbanaiyanval Kottam. As Revanta, he was the son of Sūrya, and Samjñā, but in the south he is called Hariharaputra—the son of Śiva and Vishṇu who took the form of the beautiful lady Mohini at the churning of the milky ocean. He rides on a horse with sword and shield, bow and arrow, and goes at the head of the hunters accompanied by hounds. Traditional architectural treatises, prescribe a separate temple for Ayyanar in the southern quarters of both Vaishṇava and Śaiva settlements, their presence being confirmed both by epigraphs and archaeological remains. A Pallava inscription speaks of his influence in the village populations, huge terracotta horses and elephants, sometimes made of stucco being put up in his honour.

In sculpture Ayyanar often appears seated on a pedestal, one leg pendent, the other pulled up on the seat with a waist cloth going around it, as is the case in the present example. He is generally two armed, holding a whip in his right hand the left arm resting on the knee. To his right is Pūrṇā, to the left Pushkalā, both carrying lilies (see Fig. 189)



MAP OF TAMILNADU

AND

DISTRICT MAP OF TIRUCHI AND THANJAVUR